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# NORTH SEA MINES



ROSS KAY

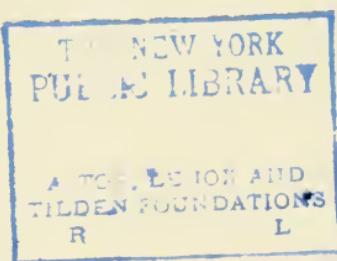
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Still calling loudly, Earl watched the gig approach.

*(Dodging the North Sea Mines.)*

(Page 35) Frontispiece

# DODGING THE NORTH SEA MINES

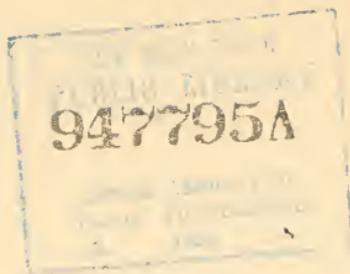
BY

ROSS KAY

**Author of "The Search for the Spy,"  
"The Air Scout," etc.**

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CLARE ANGELL

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# DODGING THE NORTH SEA MINES

## CHAPTER I

### PLANNING TO DEPART

THE August day was unusually warm. A thin veil of mist seemed almost to cover the earth and shut out the light of day. People walking along the streets of London apparently were affected by the dingy atmosphere. There was a listlessness in their actions which at first sight seemed to be due to the depression cast by the low-hanging clouds. A second glance, however, convinced Earl Platt that there was another and a deeper reason for the apparent lack of activity among the pedestrians on Victoria Street.

It was now the middle of August, 1914. For two weeks England had been at war with Germany. The anxiety aroused by such a condition naturally was manifest among the English people. A little slow to awaken to the seriousness of the conflict into which they had thrown themselves, they nevertheless were surely and steadily beginning to assert their power. There was an air of

determination, almost of sullenness, to be seen even on the faces of the old men. Already the absence of younger men was to be noted among the people one met in the streets of the great city.

Partly aware of these conditions, Earl Platt at last stopped in front of the office of the American ambassador and hesitated a brief moment before he entered. Much would depend upon the result of his visit, and the seriousness of the American boy was manifest in the expression of his face as he hesitated for a moment and glanced up and down the street.

Early in that eventful summer, Earl Platt and his twin brother, Leon, had left their home in America for a brief tour of Europe. Their father had insisted upon their making the journey by themselves, claiming that to be thrown upon their own resources would be good for both boys. In the early fall the brothers were expecting to return to America and enter college, for which they already had passed their entrance examinations.

Not long after they had landed in England, Leon had departed for France. An uncle and aunt of the boys lived in one of the suburbs of Paris and with them Leon had planned to remain a few days before he journeyed northward on a motorcycle. It was the expectation of the boys to meet in Belgium or France and then to continue their journey together.

Earl, however, had preferred to remain in England, as he had been eager to visit some of the famous schools and universities about which he had read much.

His plans had been interrupted by the unexpected outbreak of the big war in Europe. His own experiences in connection with a man who later proved to be a spy have already been recounted in another story.\*

When the war broke out, Earl had been extremely anxious for the safety of his brother, Leon. Only two letters had been received from him and several days now had passed since any word had come. Meanwhile, France already was struggling with the great host of invading Germans in a contest upon which her very life depended.

Puzzled as Earl had been to know what to do, his anxiety was increased by a cablegram received the preceding day from his father bidding him: "Find Leon." At first the perplexed boy was positive that his father could not be aware of the conditions confronting Americans, young or old, who might be caught within the war zone. Besides, where was he to look for Leon?

A letter from his uncle had informed him that Leon already had started on his northward journey. Earl's heart was heavy when he thought of

\* "The Search for the Spy."

the possibilities of peril which even at this very time might be confronting Leon. And conditions surely would be worse before they could be made better. How was he to begin his search? Telegrams to all places near the lines of soldiers would be worse than useless. Doubtless they never would be received, or if received, never delivered. Earl smiled grimly as he recalled the oft spoken words of his father that "it would do the boys good to be thrown upon their own resources and if they got into trouble to get out again by the aid of their own wits."

Earl Platt, seventeen years of age, was a sturdy lad and not easily cast down. His recent experiences, however, had been of such a serious nature that already the boy seemed much older than when he had left his home in America.

Something of his feelings was manifest in his manner as he turned abruptly and entered the waiting room of the American ambassador.

To his surprise he found the room filled with people. Many of them plainly were in serious trouble and had sought the representative of the great nation, of which they were a part, for help. A registry had been made of all those who desired to enter their names, so that the fact that they were in London might be cabled to their anxious relatives across the sea.

Earl did not feel that it was necessary for him

to go through this formality, inasmuch as he already had received a message from his father and had cabled his reply.

Seating himself in a corner of the room the perplexed boy sent in his card, relying upon the fact that the ambassador was a warm personal friend of his father to secure for him an early recognition. He was surprised and somewhat chagrined when an hour elapsed and a steady stream of visitors had been admitted while he had been compelled to wait.

It was not until afterward that he learned that all were received in the order in which their cards had been sent in or their names announced.

Earl was somewhat surprised when after the lapse of another hour a young man from the inner office came into the room and inquired, "Is Mr. Earl Platt here?" As he spoke he held in his hand the card which the young American had sent in immediately after his arrival.

"That's my name," said Earl, promptly rising from his chair as he spoke.

In response the young man at once came to the place where Earl was standing and said, "What can I do for you?"

"I sent my card in to the ambassador," said Earl somewhat tartly.

"And he has requested me to see you," replied the young man. "I am one of the assistants and

perhaps I may be able to do for you what you may need at the present time."

For a moment Earl hesitated and then noticing the frank and friendly expression on the face of the young official he said, "I am in trouble."

"I am afraid you are not the only American in that condition."

Earl laughed in spite of his anxiety, as he glanced about the room and now was aware that, in spite of the numbers that had been admitted into the ambassador's office, others had quickly filled their places in the waiting lists.

"My brother is in France," explained Earl. "I have just now received a cablegram from my father telling me to find him."

"I do not see what there is to do except what your father says."

"But how am I to do it? Where shall I begin?"

"Where is your brother?"

"That's what I do not know. And I do not know how to find out. He went to Paris to visit an uncle of ours and all the word I can get from him is that Leon left several days ago on a motorcycle. He was going to Brussels and I expected to meet him there."

"Was that before war was declared?"

"Yes. It may be that he has been caught between the lines somewhere in northern France and that he cannot get away."

The young assistant, instantly aware of the seriousness of the problem of his visitor, said in a low voice, "Has your uncle been trying to find him?"

"I do not know. The only word I have had from him is that Leon left Paris ten days or more ago. What I want is to find out the best way for me to get to Paris."

"I am afraid you will have your difficulties just now. So many of the line boats are being held up for transports that you may have to wait a little while before you can cross the Channel."

"That is what I am afraid of," said Earl. "And yet I do not know how to wait. Every day that passes without my finding out anything more about my brother makes it still harder."

"Have you wired to-day?"

"Yes, twice."

"And have not received any answer?"

Earl shook his head in reply.

"Perhaps you will get something to-night. Please give me your uncle's address and I will see what can be done. It is now half past ten," said the young assistant, glancing at his watch as he spoke. "If you will come back here about five o'clock, perhaps I may be able to get some word for you."

"Will the office be open at five o'clock?" inquired Earl quickly.

The young man smiled as he said, "Some of us have been here until two and three o'clock almost every night since the war broke out. Come at five o'clock and I will do my best to get some word for you."

Earl at once departed from the office, although as he came out upon the street he saw that the numbers of those who were seeking help from the representative of their own government were fully as great as when he had entered the place two hours before.

On his way back through the streets, Earl was aware of the change which he had marked in the morning. The English people were deeply in earnest now and plainly would stand strongly in the great conflict in which they believed they had been forced to take part.

The attitude of London had been becoming more serious with every passing day. But such a condition was necessary to arouse the people of England to a full sense of the danger which confronted them. They, however, are of that type of men who having once taken hold of a project have not learned how to let go until they have arrived at a solution that satisfies them all.

It was difficult for Earl to busy himself through the hours that followed. His thoughts mainly were of his missing brother and the instructions he had received from his father to find him.

Promptly at five o'clock Earl made his way once more to the office of the American ambassador. His surprise was great when he found the reception room still filled to its utmost capacity. Again he was compelled to wait until more than an hour had elapsed and then once more his friend of the morning appeared.

"I have not received any reply to my messages," the assistant explained to the perplexed boy, "but I have been thinking of some other things I might do to help you."

"That is good of you," said Earl eagerly.

"You will find difficulty just now in securing passage across the Channel. The sailings are very uncertain and many of the big boats have been turned into transports for the troops."

"So I have heard."

"But I sent for a friend of mine directly after you were here this morning and I have made arrangements so that you can sail with him, that is, if you still think that is the best thing for you to do."

"For France?" inquired Earl eagerly.

"Yes. He has a yacht and is to sail from Hastings to-morrow. Just where he will land of course is uncertain. But that is not important for you, I understand, as you will be able to make your way somehow to Paris where you can talk this matter over with your uncle."

"You have been very kind," said Earl warmly.

"Not at all, that is what we are here for,—to help unfortunate Americans in distress and we have had some experiences that would make you cry and some that would make you wake up in the night laughing and even hang on to your sides. I guess it is a good thing there are some people that make you laugh in times like these. One fat, old woman insisted that we should make arrangements by which her poodle could be kept in a first cabin room and looked after by the stewardess all the way to New York."

"I am not quite as bad as that," laughed Earl, "but I shall be mighty glad to go with your friend. You say that he is to sail from Hastings?"

"Yes. You will have trouble if you try to make your way to Hastings on the trains. All the trains to the coast are very uncertain just now."

"How can I go then?"

"He will call for you at the Metropole to-morrow at ten o'clock and take you in his car."

Earl thanked his friend and at once departed from the place, his heart much lighter because of the prospect of sailing on the morrow. And yet the eager-hearted boy, if he had known what experiences awaited him, not only in France, but also before he had crossed the English Channel, would have hesitated long before he embarked on the yacht of the friendly Englishman.

## CHAPTER II

### INTO THE CHANNEL

EARLY the following morning Earl was summoned from his room in the Metropole by a message that an automobile was waiting for him. Already the young American had made arrangements to leave his baggage at the hotel, taking with him only what was necessary for a brief journey. Everything was in readiness when the call came and Earl quickly responded.

On the street in the front of the hotel, he found a large touring car in which three men were seated. Two of the occupants were men in middle life, and the third was a young man not more than four or five years older than Earl.

“Beg pardon,” called the youngest of the men when Earl appeared, “but are you Mr. Earl Platt?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then you are the party for whom I was to stop. You want to cross the Channel, I understand?” he added in a low voice as Earl stepped close to the car.

“I do very much.”

"Then everything is ready and we will start at once. What have you done with your luggage?"

"I have only this kit bag," responded Earl. "I am leaving most of my belongings here."

"Very good. Then we will start at once if you are ready."

Earl quickly took his seat beside the young man and the car at once departed.

The entire party was silent as the car sped swiftly forward. To Earl it was marvelous how skillfully the chauffeur maintained the pace at which he was driving and yet avoided all collisions in the congested streets through which they were moving.

Even when the automobile came into the open country roads the four travelers still were silent.

What the purpose of his companions in making the voyage across the English Channel might be, Earl had no means of knowing.

He had no fear, however, because everything was conforming to the promise of the young assistant at the office of the American ambassador.

A little after the noon hour, the youngest of the three men, who apparently was the owner of the car, said to Earl, "Have you ever been in this part of England before?"

"No, sir. I landed at Liverpool. I went as far as Dover but I had my troubles there."

"What was that, sir?"

“Why, I was arrested as a spy,” replied Earl somewhat foolishly.

“That’s most extraordinary!” said the young Englishman. “You must have had a jolly time.”

“That is a matter of opinion,” replied Earl dryly. “I was treated fairly well, however, and have no complaints to make.”

“If you have never been in this part of England before,” said the young man, “you will be interested to know that we are now right near the old battle field of Hastings. Quite likely they have taught you in the American schools about the battle which took place here?”

“Do you mean the Battle of Hastings?” inquired Earl dryly. “The fight between William the Conqueror and the Saxons in 1066?”

“Quite so. Well, this is where the fight took place.”

“I thought the battle was at Hastings,” suggested Earl.

“Not at all. Really most of the fighting was up yonder on the Heights of Senlac. That is what the name of the battle really ought to be. It actually is seven miles from Hastings.”

“Why do they call it the Battle of Hastings then?” inquired Earl.

“Why, I am sure I never thought of that. But then, you know, that has been the name ever since the coming of William the Conqueror.”

“What did you say the name of this village is?” inquired Earl, as he looked about him at the little place whose population, he thought, must be about three thousand.

“Battle. Yonder is Battle Abbey.”

“What is that?”

“Why, King William, it is reported, made a vow while he was fighting that if he should win the battle he would erect a church on the battle-field. He was true to his word, sir. It would be quite interesting for you to visit it some day.”

Conversation ceased as the car swept swiftly forward toward its destination.

As they passed along some of the streets near the shore Earl was impressed by the promenade pier which extends three hundred yards or more directly out into the English Channel. There were many people to be seen on the streets and along the extensive beaches.

“Hastings must be to England what Atlantic City is to America,” said Earl.

“I fancy so,” replied the young Englishman, “though upon my word I do not recall that I ever heard of Atlantic City. Brighton is the most popular resort we have.”

It was manifest, however, that the interest of the young Englishman was much keener in his voyage than in the sights afforded by the historic old town.

In a brief time the party arrived at the dock, and Earl was surprised when he saw that the only boat alongside the pier was a beautiful little steam yacht about sixty feet in length. He had not made any inquiries as to the character of the boat in which he was to make the voyage across the Channel. It had been sufficient for him that he had been promised a passage. If the boat before him was the one in which he was to sail the young American had no difficulty in deciding that speed would be made and that his quarters would not only be comfortable but luxurious.

“Here we are, sir,” said the young Englishman, as the door of the car was opened and he stepped out.

Earl, who felt that he was a passenger and therefore not entitled to ask many questions, in spite of his deep interest in the beautiful little boat at once responded and followed the leader, whose name he did not yet know, as he led the way toward the yacht.

It was plain that the boat was ready for departure, for smoke was rising from the stack and sounds of escaping steam were heard.

Still without making any inquiry, Earl followed his leader and entering the beautiful little cabin, in response to the Englishman’s suggestion handed his bag to the steward who at once appeared.

Turning to the deck he found that the crew al-

ready were casting off and in a brief time the yacht was headed for the open waters of the English Channel.

As he glanced behind him Earl for the moment was thinking more of the sights which the famous spot had seen in years gone by than he was of his own perplexities and the voyage immediately before him. He tried to picture the coming of William the Conqueror and his hardy Northmen. Up on the heights along the shores the Saxons had gathered to dispute his landing. The sounds of the war-cries and the battle once more seemed to be heard in his ears. Almost, he thought, he could picture to himself the death of Harold when the Norman arrow pierced his eye.

The young American, however, was speedily recalled to his present position by the words of his leader as he said heartily, "We are to have a bit of luncheon and shall be glad to have you join us."

Earl, who had not given any thought to luncheon, instantly found that he was fully prepared to accept the invitation.

The little boat was speeding swiftly over the waters, which on this day were unusually rough. The waves in the distance were capped with white and there was a stiff wind blowing from the south-east.

He was aware that all three Englishmen were quietly observing him, perhaps wondering whether

or not he would enjoy the rough passage to the French coast. Not only was Earl ignorant of the names of his fellow voyagers, but he did not even know the port at which they were expecting to land.

His main desire, however, as we know, was to reach the shores of France and he was confident that his own resources would help him when once he had arrived.

The heartiness of the other members of the party, however, soon made him feel at home and though he was aware that the young man, who apparently was the owner of the yacht, was somewhat anxious, he was at a loss to understand the source of his anxiety. The day was ideal and the contrast between the heat of London and the cool air of the wind swept Channel was most grateful.

“I am a bit uneasy,” said the young Englishman. “Our transports must be passing about this time and if they are, we shall not be made welcome if we come too near them.”

“How many soldiers are being taken to France?” inquired Earl.

A change came over the faces of his companions at the question and the young Englishman replied, “It is impossible for me to say.”

Earl instantly was aware that his question was not welcome and he discreetly decided that he would not repeat it.

By the time luncheon was completed and the English coast was no longer to be seen, one of the crew came to the stern and in a low voice spoke to the owner of the yacht. The latter instantly was aroused and advancing with the sailor toward the bow, he took his glasses and peered far into the distance. Several minutes elapsed before he rejoined his companions and then he said dryly, "I fancy our transports are up ahead."

"They are not having a very smooth passage," laughed one of the men.

"Quite so. They will not care as to the water. They are more interested in the work of the air scouts."

"Why?" inquired Earl quickly.

As the young Englishman turned, his expression was not one to soothe the feelings of the impulsive young American.

"It is quite likely," he said, "that the English transports may not be the only vessels on the English Channel at this time."

"I should not think they would care about that. The English fleet is twice as large as the German, and the French of course will help."

"Quite so," replied the Englishman quietly.

The conversation, however, was not continued and in a brief time the fleet of transports in the distance could be seen by all the party.

Several aëroplanes also were visible and the

presence of many of the great fighting ships of the British battle-fleet was evident.

To Earl's surprise the yacht continued steadily on its way, apparently approaching the fleet before it.

That there might be danger in such an approach Earl was convinced. He would not, however, make any protest, and in keen excitement watched the ships in the distance as the yacht sped over the rough waters.

Indeed the waves were steadily rising with the increasing wind. The little boat was tossing more and more as it sped over the sea. The deck was slippery and it was with difficulty that any one made his way forward or aft.

A signal had been hoisted, although Earl was unable to determine just what it was when he glanced at the masthead. He was deeply interested, however, and his excitement increased when at last the yacht came within one hundred yards of one of the great battle-ships.

He rose from his seat and approached the rail to obtain a closer view of the magnificent fighting machine. As he did so a sudden roll of the little boat caused him to lose his balance. Before he could regain his footing on the slippery deck he was thrown against the rail in such a manner that his hands slipped from the post and he fell headlong into the tossing waters.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DESTROYER

**W**HEN Earl Platt rose to the surface the yacht was at a considerable distance from him. He shouted in his loudest tones, but his call was unheard. The other members of his party had all been in the bow of the boat while Earl had been left in the stern.

The waves dashed over him and it was only by exerting himself to the utmost of his strength that Earl was able to keep himself afloat. With difficulty he divested himself of his coat and also succeeded in casting off his shoes. Fortunately he was an expert swimmer, and often he had declared that he could not recall the time when he was unable to swim.

In a brief time the yacht was so far away that even his calls could not be heard. The wind was strong and the tossing waves had a music all their own. Earl now was aware that he must struggle for his life. Almost in despair he saw the far away fleet proceeding steadily on its way. The great transports loomed high above the waters

and he fancied he was able to distinguish the forms of the sailors and soldiers outlined against the rail. The convoy of battle-ships only served to increase the desperation of the struggling boy.

Earl Platt, however, was not a boy who easily lost control of himself. Even in his present peril he decided that he must do his utmost to preserve his strength. Relaxing in a measure, he permitted himself to be driven forward by the waves, while he simply strove to keep himself above the water. His strength, however, was rapidly leaving him, and, almost in despair, he soon was aware that his efforts could not be continued much longer.

At that moment, however, he saw a few yards away a floating spar or log. With renewed determination he swam toward the floating timber and succeeded in reaching it. It was sufficiently heavy to keep him afloat and the relief to the struggling boy was quickly manifest. Crawling part way upon the end of the heavy spar he permitted himself to drift, clinging to his refuge without being compelled to exert himself.

The water was comparatively warm and apart from his feeling of exhaustion Earl was not suffering.

Once more he looked at the far away fleet. It seemed to him now to be farther from him than when he had first discovered it. Steadily the

great ships continued on their course and though he did not know whither they were bound he was positive that it was beyond the power of any one on board to discern him where he was.

Once more he scanned the entire horizon. No shore could be seen and Earl's fears returned with redoubled force. What probability was there that he would ever be seen or rescued? Doubtless the ships that had regularly crossed the English Channel on their voyages between England and France now were withdrawn. It was also not probable that any pleasure-boats or even a merchant craft would venture upon the troubled waters until more definite knowledge had been received as to their safety on such a voyage.

A half-hour passed and the fleet of transports now was far away. The sun was low in the western sky and night would soon be at hand. With the thought, Earl once more tried to push forward the spar to which he was clinging, but the heavy timber responded only slightly to his efforts. A vision of the coming darkness increased his fears of being left long in the water. He even pictured to himself how at last, chilled and exhausted, his grip on the spar would gradually relax and he would slide into the depths beneath him.

The prospect once more aroused him and he looked eagerly in every direction for some means of rescue.

Far in the distance he discerned the smoke of a steamer. Apparently the vessel was not large and yet even as he watched the trail of smoke he was aware that it was moving swiftly. And it was approaching, or at least it seemed to be moving in the direction of the place where he was floating.

Almost fascinated by the sight, Earl struggled no longer and continued to watch the ship in the distance. After a few minutes had elapsed he was positive that the faraway boat certainly was coming toward him. Whether or not it would come near enough to enable him to hail it would not be known until a half-hour or more had elapsed.

Clinging desperately to the timber, Earl waited and watched the long, low cloud of smoke in the distance. Steadily it increased in size as the boat came nearer and he was convinced that if darkness did not intervene it might be possible for him to make his presence known to those on board.

He drew his water-soaked handkerchief from his pocket, and even when he was convinced that it was impossible for his action to be seen he waved his signal aloft while he clung desperately to his place on the spar.

Repeatedly he tried to make known his presence and increased his efforts when it became manifest that the boat was indeed apparently headed in

his direction. The light now was becoming somewhat dim but he was able to see that the vessel was low and long, evidently a part of the British fleet.

A few minutes later he was convinced that the boat was a torpedo-boat destroyer. The vital question now was whether or not his signal would be seen and he could make his presence known.

Almost fascinated by the sight of the powerful little fighter, Earl watched its course as it swiftly drew near. It was evidently coming directly toward him. Indeed, the fear that he might be run over in the dim light before he should be discovered increased his alarm. The boat now was not many yards distant. Once more Earl waved his signal of distress and shouted in his loudest tones.

He was well aware that his voice would doubtless be drowned by the noise of the waves, but his plight was desperate and he was doing his utmost to find some way to escape.

Suddenly, the speed of the swift little torpedo boat slackened. Scarcely daring to trust the evidence of his own eyes Earl gazed at the boat with an anxiety that cannot be described. The issues of life and death depended upon what followed in the next few minutes.

Increasing his efforts to make himself heard, he raised himself higher upon the spar and wildly

waved his bedraggled signal. As he did so the slippery spar suddenly rolled beneath him and he quickly found himself once more struggling in the water.

With a supreme effort he regained his refuge and as he raised himself above the water he saw that the torpedo-boat destroyer had stopped and that a small boat, which he thought was a yawl or gig, was approaching him. His handkerchief had been lost when he had fallen into the water and all the desperate boy could do now to make known his presence was to wave his hand and shout in his loudest tones.

The little boat loomed large in the dim light, but to his relief he soon saw that it was surely approaching. Still calling loudly, Earl watched it, feeling almost as if he had no connection with the exciting events in which he was sharing. His sensibilities were becoming numb but he still continued his efforts.

At last the men in the gig plainly had discovered him. With long sweeps of their oars they swiftly drove the little boat ahead and only a few minutes had elapsed before they were alongside and had seized the well-nigh exhausted boy in their arms and drawn him safely on board.

Earl was conscious of his feeling of deep relief as he heard an order spoken in a low voice and the little boat sped back toward the destroyer.

No questions were asked of him at the time, and, indeed, as far as appearances went, not one of the sailors seemed to be aware of his presence as he sat trembling in the stern of the yawl.

A group of sailors standing near the rail speedily helped him on board the destroyer and as he stood on the deck, chilled and confused, a young man, whom he at once took to be an officer, said to him, "And who are you, sir?"

"I am a young American," replied Earl, his teeth chattering as he spoke.

"And do young Americans try to swim the English Channel?" inquired the officer.

"No, sir. I do not know," chattered Earl. "I was on board a yacht and fell overboard."

"Whose yacht?"

"I don't know, sir."

"What yacht was it?"

"That I don't know. We came from London in an automobile and the minute we got on board the yacht she left the dock."

"Where was that?"

"At Hastings."

"And where were you going?"

"To France."

"Quite likely," said the officer, "but there are several places along the French coast where boats land."

"Yes, sir."

“To which place were you going?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

The officer stared blankly at the dripping boy and then said to one of the sailors, “Take him below, Tom, and fit him out with some dry clothing. Perhaps when he is rid of those soaking garments he has on, he may be able to talk a little more intelligently.”

In response to the direction of the officer, Earl was taken in hand by two of the sailors and conducted to their quarters. There, after a brief time, he was supplied with dry clothing, although he smiled as he thought of the appearance which he must present in them. Care had not been taken in selecting garments that would fit him, the main purpose of his rescuers being simply to see that he was once more clad in dry clothing.

As soon as this task had been completed he was conducted to the place on deck where the young officer was standing.

“I trust you are clothed and in your right mind,” he said not unpleasantly as Earl approached.

“Thank you. Yes, sir.”

“Now tell me your story.”

Thus bidden, Earl related all that had befallen him from the time when he had sought help at the office of the American ambassador to the time when he had been rescued from his plight.

"Have you anything to prove the truth of what you have told me?" inquired the officer when the story at last had all been told.

"I am afraid not, sir. If you wish, you may consult the American ambassador—"

"A fine chance I shall have to talk with any man on shore," interrupted the officer. "I wish I knew what to do with you."

"You can set me ashore the first time you land anywhere."

Even in the dim light Earl was aware of the smile on the young man's face as he said, "It is not likely we shall land anywhere very soon, least of all on the French coast."

"Where are you bound now?" inquired Earl quickly.

"All I can tell you is that we are not soon going ashore."

"And can't I be landed anywhere?"

"Not yet, sir."

"But what am I to do?"

"I am afraid you will have to take a cruise with us. Just how long that will be I cannot tell you. I am sorry for your plight, but in times like these there is no law but necessity. My advice to you is to make yourself as useful as possible on board and wait until we find some place where we can land you, if the captain thinks it will be safe to be rid of you."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DISCOVERY IN THE FOG

EARL was aware that the interview was ended. The officer abruptly turned away and the young American slowly walked along the deck. He was aware also that the destroyer was moving swiftly over the water and apparently was headed for the Straits of Dover.

The troubled boy was now fully aware of the difficulties of the position in which he found himself. Three thousand miles from home, on board one of the fleetest vessels of the British navy, steaming swiftly in a direction where danger might and probably would be found, with no prospect of being permitted to land, the outlook, in view of all these things, was dark.

Furthermore he did not know even the name of the boat which had rescued him nor that of one of the officers or crew.

Utterly wearied by his exertions he was grateful when one of the sailors approached him with the suggestion that he might turn in if he so desired.

Accepting the suggestion as implying more than was spoken Earl accompanied the sailor below and

soon stretched himself upon a bunk to which he was directed.

It was long before the perplexed young American was able to sleep. The swift motion of the destroyer was manifest and the sounds of the sailors in their duties at times were plainly heard by the troubled boy.

Earl was aware that the North Sea at the time was considered a place of special peril. The German navy had scattered mines broadcast and already several boats had been destroyed by them.

He was ignorant of the location of the German fleet and equally unaware of the destination of the swiftly moving little boat in which he was a passenger.

For a long while Earl waited, hoping that the boat would seek an anchorage near the mouth of the Thames. He knew that the spot was well-guarded and it occurred to him that there was a possibility of the destroyer being sent to join the protecting fleet.

Whether or not his wish had been granted he did not know when he awoke. There was sufficient light to enable him to see that morning had come. Recalling the exciting events of the preceding day, Earl listened intently to discover if the boat was still moving.

Quickly he was aware that the speed was less than it had been the preceding afternoon, but that

the destroyer was still moving through the waters. Just where she was could not be known until he returned to the deck.

Hastily donning the clothing which had been provided after his rescue from the sea, he made his way once more to the deck.

It was now early in the morning. The sun had just appeared above the eastern horizon. One glance was sufficient to enable the troubled boy to see that he was beyond the sight of land. No ship was within his sight, he found as he glanced quickly over the sea, which now was unusually calm.

Apparently slight heed was given the young American, although several of the crew glanced curiously at him when he first appeared.

In spite of his anxiety, Earl speedily discovered that he was unusually hungry. He was quick to respond when not long afterward an invitation was given him to go below to share the simple fare of the crew. Almost all the men were silent and it was plainly manifest that serious work of some kind was being undertaken by the little destroyer.

When Earl returned to the deck his interest in the marvelous little boat, on which he was an unwilling as well as an unwelcome passenger, was ignored when he discovered that it was moving with extreme caution. The watches were dou-

bled and additional men had been stationed to be on the lookout for the floating mines.

By this time several sail boats had appeared in the distance far to his left. It was therefore not difficult for Earl to surmise that the torpedo-boat destroyer had passed far beyond the Straits of Dover and now was somewhere in the North Sea.

Soon traces of smoke on the distant horizon indicated the presence of other vessels besides the sailing boats. Doubtless some of these were trawlers and the men were still venturing to make their way to the fishing banks.

Every vessel in the distance was closely observed by the officers through their glasses. But the course of the destroyer was still unchanged. To all appearances she was moving swiftly in the direction opposite to that which Earl Platt wished most of all to take. France must be far behind him and was becoming more distant with every passing moment.

One of the trawlers soon was so near the destroyer that her outlines plainly could be seen. Even the crew could be distinguished as they watched the swiftly passing boat.

Suddenly, even as Earl followed the glances of the men, the distant trawler appeared to stop abruptly and Earl fancied he was able almost to distinguish a shaking or trembling of the vessel. An instant later the bow was lifted into the air

and then came the low indistinct sound of an explosion.

“She’s struck a mine,” exclaimed one of the crew, who chanced to be standing near Earl.

“Maybe so,” said another sailor. “Though there’s no tellin’ but she may have been blown up by a submarine.”

Whatever the cause of the strange action of the trawler may have been, the course of the destroyer instantly was changed as she started at full speed toward the place where the unfortunate boat had foundered.

Before it arrived, however, the steam-trawler lurched heavily for a moment, next seemed to be lifted by a mighty, unseen hand and then disappeared from sight beneath the waves.

An exclamation of horror escaped Earl’s lips as he became aware of the fate of the fishermen.

The destroyer still was a mile or more distant from the place where the trawler had sunk. If any of the crew were floating in the water it was not likely many of them could be rescued. Besides, there was the danger from the floating mines, one of which doubtless had caused the destruction of the fishing boat. At any moment another one of these hidden perils might be found and the destroyer share the fate of the little steamer which had just gone down.

Apparently, however, not one of the crew was

thinking of peril, for all were intent upon rescuing the unfortunate men in the distance who might still be floating, in spite of the wounds they had received.

As Earl turned he saw standing near him the young officer who had spoken to him the preceding evening when he had been rescued from the water.

"I have read," said Earl, "that The Hague Treaty prevents any country scattering mines in the open sea."

"Quite so, but our enemy openly declares that he has no more regard for a treaty than he has for any other scrap of paper."

"That is the reason why England declared war, isn't it?"

"It is. If Belgium had not been invaded we never should have gone into the struggle."

"It makes me smile to read about the Kaiser calling upon Italy to live up to her promise as a member of the Triple Alliance, while he himself does not consider his own promise to leave Belgium neutral as worth 'the paper it was written on.' Are you not afraid," he continued, "that this boat will strike a mine?"

"There is that possibility."

"Do you know whether any are planted near here?"

"From the way that trawler behaved it is plain

that no part of the North Sea is free from them. It is quite likely we may find some."

"Are we in the North Sea?" Earl inquired eagerly.

"So I surmise. Look yonder!" said the officer, quickly pointing as he spoke to a small dark object that could be seen in the water not far in advance of them.

Plainly the object had been discovered by others as well as the officer, for the course of the destroyer quickly was changed and she swiftly approached the spot indicated.

In a brief time it was manifest that the floating object was the body of a man. It also was soon evident that the man was lifeless. Nevertheless the destroyer halted in her course, while a boat was lowered and the lifeless body was taken on board. Not long after, a wounded sailor was rescued and a little later another, who although he had not received any wounds was unable to speak because of his exhaustion in his efforts to keep himself afloat.

Apparently indifferent as many of the crew were, the sight of the wounded and of the lifeless man caused Earl's cheeks to blanch and for a moment he thought he would be compelled to go below. Recovering, however, in a brief time he eagerly resumed his watch of the sea. He was startled when he saw that a fog apparently was

settling down upon the waters. The mist was rapidly approaching and becoming denser as it came.

"There must be other survivors," said the young officer. "We must make a further search. Perhaps you would be glad to lend a hand," he added, turning to Earl as he spoke.

"Indeed, I should be glad," replied the boy quickly.

A few moments later Earl found himself seated in one of the little boats which now with others were searching for the bodies of the men who had been killed in the explosion. A careful lookout was maintained, but the search was unrewarded.

When at last the word was given for the men to reverse their course and return to the destroyer, Earl was aware that the mist which had been settling over the sea was now so heavy that he was unable to make out the direction in which the boat they were seeking was located.

Apparently, however, he was the only one on board the little craft who was in such a predicament. Confidently the men bent to their oars and swiftly started toward the destroyer which, the last time he had seen it, Earl thought was two miles or more away.

The sound of the oars, as the men swung backward and forward, to the excited boy seemed to be unnaturally loud. He was doing his utmost to

maintain his place and show that he was able to fulfill his part. The creaking of the oars and the dripping of the water were the only sounds he had heard when suddenly out of the mist there appeared the huge shape of a fighting ship of some kind. There was a sudden low exclamation from the man in the stern of the little boat, a sharp command to back-water, and the progress of the little craft quickly was stopped. Every man now was peering through the fog and trying to discover what the vessel was which had so suddenly loomed up before them.

## CHAPTER V

### ON BOARD THE TRAWLER

THE fog was still so dense that it was impossible for the men clearly to discern the outlines of the huge vessel. Enough, however, had been seen to convince the beholders that the ship was a man-of-war, though to which side it belonged it was impossible to determine.

Naturally the occupants of the little boat were afraid to make their presence known until they knew more about the stranger. Great as their interest was, however, this feeling quickly gave place to alarm when suddenly the roar of great guns broke in upon the silence of the morning. The sound was well-nigh deafening and so startling that instinctively the men bent to their oars to escape from the place.

Their efforts quickly ceased, however, when, as if in response to the challenge of the great cruiser, an answering shot came from an enemy not far away. Before the startled sailors were fully aware of what was occurring the guns of the cruiser again boomed forth and replies also came from the distance from what the men believed to be the destroyer to which they belonged.

“We are in the line of firing,” exclaimed the petty officer in command of the little boat. He spoke in low tones, but his words were distinctly heard by every one on board. As if in confirmation of his statement, a shell struck the water only a few yards from the place where the men now were lying on their oars.

Earl Platt was more terrified than ever he had been in his life. The roar was almost deafening, for the guns now were in full action, and within a brief time either one or the other of the fighting machines probably would be compelled to surrender or be sunk.

“Be quiet, men,” called the officer in the little boat. “The cruiser is going ahead.”

His words proved to be true, for the great ship soon was moving so swiftly that she passed beyond the sight of the excited watchers.

It was not long also before the sound of the firing came from a greater distance. It was manifest that both the destroyer and the cruiser were moving swiftly, one perhaps trying in the fog to escape from the attack of the other.

For a half hour the sound of firing was heard, although it was less frequent and plainly was several miles away.

Meanwhile, the fog which had settled on the sea was still dense. At the word of the petty officer the men once more rested on their oars.

The uncertainty became even more difficult to bear than had been the evidences of the terrific struggle. Shut in by a wall of mist, through which they could not see far in any direction, uncertain now as to the way in which they should proceed, fearful of the presence of other fighting ships, the anxiety of every one on board increased with the passing moments. Occasionally one man spoke in low tones to his mate, but the sound of his voice betrayed his anxiety.

Still, at the bidding of their officer, the men drifted over the sea. Fortunately the waves were not high and safety was therefore assured unless some hostile boat should suddenly emerge from the mist as the cruiser had done a little while before.

How much time had elapsed, Earl never knew when at last it became manifest that the sun was well up in the heavens and that the fog was beginning to be burned away. The order, however, was to wait for the fog to lift still more before the little boat should seek safety. Whether the destroyer had been the victim or the victor, of course was unknown. If the swift boat had been sent to the bottom, the men well knew that their own chance to escape was slight. Without doubt the cruiser, if it did belong to the enemy, would be searching the waters for those who had escaped from the destroyer.

A half-hour passed and still the word to depart was not given. The fog had lifted now until it was possible for the men to see a mile or more in the great circle which surrounded them.

The effect of the increased light upon the men and the disappearance of the heavy mist at once became apparent. Their spirits revived and with increased animation, in low tones they frequently spoke to one another.

“It’s my feeling,” one man near Earl remarked, “that we can’t be far off Great Yarmouth.”

“That’s my feelin’, too,” replied his mate. “Hi’m thinkin’ we can’t be far off shore, either. We’d soon know if ’e’d give the horder.”

Almost as he spoke the officer said quietly, “I think we’d better stay where we are a little while longer. I do not know where we are yet and when one is uncertain what to do, the best thing is to do nothing.”

However, when another hour had passed the fog had become so thin that it was possible now to see far into the distance. Still no boat was within sight and though all the men carefully scanned the waters they were not able to discover either the destroyer or the cruiser.

“There be no way o’ knowin’ what ’ave ’appened, but accordin’ to my notion it be not wise to stay ’ere a-restin’ on our oars,” grumbled one of the crew.

“We must wait until we can find out where the destroyer is,” suggested the officer in command.

A brief silence followed the statement but the uneasiness of the men again soon became manifest.

“I be certain,” said one of the sailors, “that the shore be not more nor six or seven knots from ‘ere.”

“We do not want to go ashore yet,” retorted another of the sailors. “ ‘Tis not the shore we’re lookin’ for, but the torpedo-boat destroyer.”

As the time passed and the missing boat did not appear, the anxiety of the men manifestly was shared by the officer, and at last he said, “We’ll make for the shore.”

At his command the men resumed their labors at the oars, all working heartily and steadily.

“Not so fast,” called the officer in a low voice. “We must not forget that mines are floating all around these waters. At any moment we might strike one.”

A careful lookout was maintained and after the men had rowed a half-hour or more, no signs of the floating perils were discovered.

“Yonder trawler,” said one of the men, as he pointed to some smoke which now could be seen in the distance, “I am thinkin’, is right off Great Yarmouth. We might ‘ear whether that is so or not if we row a bit nearer.”

The men had been resting on their oars for a brief time now and at the suggestion of the old sailor the young officer, who manifestly was somewhat uncertain of his bearings, gave the word for the men to resume their task.

As if by common consent their efforts drove the little boat swiftly toward the distant trawler. Not much time had elapsed before all were able to see that the stranger was a steamer and was moving slowly toward them.

As she came nearer, the men ceased their efforts and waited for the boat to approach. The daring of the hardy Englishmen in venturing to continue their occupation in the North Sea after they had been notified by the Navy that the enemy had scattered mines all about the region, was marvelous. Many of them had been busy in searching for the mines, some of which floated above the surface of the water, and others just below. A report had been received that one daring crew with their nets had succeeded in securing more than three hundred of these objects, so dangerous to navigation.

At last the trawler came so near that it was possible to hail it.

“Ahoy, there!” called the officer, rising in the stern of the little boat. “What boat is that?”

“The *Mermaid* from Great Yarmouth.”

“That’s what I said,” muttered the sailor sitting next to Earl.

“Have you seen a torpedo-boat destroyer near here lately?”

The reply came back that no such boat had been seen that day.

“Have you seen a cruiser?”

“Not near enough to make out her name.”

“Did you hear a fight?”

“Yes, sir,” replied the captain of the trawler. “Leastwise we heard the sound of great guns and we thought there was a fight of some kind going on, but we didn’t see any craft except the cruiser.”

“I am wondering if you will take one of our men on board,” called the officer.

As no reply at first was given to his inquiry the officer repeated his question. “We have a young American with us whom we picked up. He doesn’t want to stay with us and we certainly don’t want him. Can you take him on board and land him when you go ashore?”

Aware that he was the subject of the conversation, Earl glanced quickly at the officer and then looked toward the trawler, which now was only a few yards distant.

It had not occurred to him before that he was to be transferred and a feeling of thankfulness instantly swept over his heart as he was aware that an opportunity for returning to the shore had been obtained. It was true that his present plan to go to France was thwarted, but even to be com-

elled to return to the English coast was greatly to be preferred to an unwelcome stay on board a British torpedo-boat destroyer. Besides, no one knew whether or not the destroyer was still near or whether she had been the victim of the cruiser which had so swiftly borne down upon her.

However, there was no time for deliberation and when in response to the request of the officer the little boat was drawn alongside the trawler, Earl nimbly climbed up the rope ladder which was lowered for him and soon gained the deck. Once there he waved his hand in farewell to his recent companions who at once pulled away from the spot.

As he glanced at his clothing Earl was aware that he still was dressed in the nondescript garments which the kind-hearted crew of the destroyer had loaned him. His own suit might now be in the bottom of the North Sea if the destroyer had been defeated. However, there was no possibility of changing and in some confusion Earl turned to face the captain of the trawler, who now approached and spoke to him.

## CHAPTER VI

### A MYSTERIOUS BOAT

**T**HREE was a brief interval of silence while the captain and his men stared curiously at Earl. The young American, although he could not find reasons for his feeling, nevertheless was impressed by what seemed to him to be hostile glances on every side. Even the captain was openly suspicious.

“Who are you?” he demanded as once more he spoke to his unwelcome passenger.

Startled by the sound of the captain’s voice, which to Earl seemed to have an unmistakable German burr, he did not at first reply.

“Who are you?” again demanded the captain more sternly.

Still Earl stared at the man. There was no question in his mind now that if the man was not a German, his pronunciation of English words was decidedly like that of one who had learned that language late in life.

Hastily Earl glanced about the deck and the men whom he saw displayed unmistakably a German cast of features. What could it all mean?

Had the Germans had the temerity to cross the North Sea and venture upon the fishing banks? To all appearances this was the occupation of the men on board the trawler. Immense reels of nets were to be seen and the unmistakable odor of fish greeted his nostrils.

“You was better answer me,” spoke up the captain once more.

This time there was no hesitation on the part of the young American. He was aware that he must explain his unexpected presence on the deck. Even before he spoke there flashed into his mind the impression which his strange appearance must produce. His clothing was nondescript and made up of the gifts from the various members of the crew on board the destroyer. Assuredly, too, the garments were not well-fitting and Earl understood fully the strange impression he must make upon the men before him. It might be that his garb was the cause of the suspicious glances which he received from every one.

“When I look at myself,” he said laughingly, as he glanced at his clothing, “I am almost at a loss to know who I am. But I am an American boy, stranded in England.”

“What are you doing out here?”

“I started for France where my brother is—”

Even the captain could not repress a slight scowl which appeared upon his face as Earl spoke,

and he sharply said, "For what were you going to France?"

"To find my brother. We separated two or three weeks ago and he went over to visit an uncle near Paris. He planned then to start on a motorcycle and I was to meet him in Belgium or Germany."

"And yet you say you were bound for France."

"Yes, sir." Earl was aware that the captain was a powerful man and one likely to be easily excited. He was doing his utmost to speak in a natural tone, thereby making the strange story which he was telling sound more reasonable. Somehow his feeling of nervousness had not left him although his courage did not desert him.

"Have you some money?"

Earl slapped the pockets in his trousers, aware for the first time that his purse and his watch had been left with his other possessions on board the destroyer.

"Not a penny," he exclaimed. "I fell into the water and when I had some dry clothes given me I left my purse and my watch on board."

"How was it," said the captain, "that you was on board a British torpedo-boat destroyer if you were trying to get to France?"

"I started in a little yacht," explained Earl, "but I fell overboard and the yacht went on without me. I got hold of a floating spar and kept up

for a long time. How long, I cannot tell, though it seems to me to have been days. The destroyer picked me up, but I could not be landed in France."

"How long ago was that?"

"Yesterday. I have received a cablegram from my father in New York bidding me find Leon before I started for home." Earl was doing his utmost now to allay the suspicions of the men who still stood about him. He was fearful that his efforts had not been successful, for at times the expression on the captain's face was malignant rather than suspicious.

"Where do you want to go now?"

"I want to go ashore."

"But where?"

"You belong in Great Yarmouth, don't you?"

"This trawler was the *Mermaid* out of Great Yarmouth," replied the captain soberly.

"That's what I understood. When you go ashore you can land me."

"And how much shall you pay? If you have no money I do not see how you pay in marks?"

"I shall not pay in marks," laughed Earl nervously. "I do not believe the Englishmen would take a mark to-day for any debt."

The sudden change in the expression of some of the crew caused Earl to wish heartily that he had not referred to the German money. Who were

these men and what were they? To all appearances the boat was what it pretended to be, a trawler off the English coast. As he glanced along the deck and noted the lines of the little vessel, he was sharply interrupted by the captain who said, "Very well, I takes you to the cabin."

"But I don't want to go to the cabin," said Earl.

"To the cabin," said the captain almost brutally, as he turned to his crew.

Warned by the voice and actions of the man, Earl wisely made no further protest and at once quietly accompanied the sailors who conducted him below the deck. There he was shown a small room or cabin, very plainly furnished and apparently belonging to the captain or his mate. A single port-hole was the only means by which light could enter and as Earl glanced out he saw that he was barely above the surface of the sea.

Why had he been compelled to go below the deck? Turning to the sailor before he departed Earl said quickly, "Am I a prisoner?"

The man shook his head, but did not reply.

"If I am not, why am I shut in here?"

Again the man shook his head, but did not answer the question.

Concluding that it was impossible to gain any information from the sailor, who appeared to be unusually stupid, Earl glanced again out of the

port-hole. As he turned away the sailor stepped quickly from the little room and Earl was startled when he heard the key turned in the lock. He was a prisoner, there could be no mistake now. He had been ordered to the little cabin and the door had been locked upon him. Just what the meaning of it all was Earl could not decide. Perplexed as well as angry, he seated himself upon the rude little bunk and tried more calmly to think over what had befallen him.

At last he decided that his troubles were due to his strange garb. As he glanced once more at himself he smiled and said, "If my own mother were here I don't believe she would know me. Well, all I hope is that the trawler won't stay too long out here in the North Sea. I wonder why these men look so much like Germans. And they speak like them, too." Earl shook his head, deciding that the problem was too perplexing for him to solve at the time.

He was startled when, through the open port-hole, he heard the sound of some one singing in a low voice,—

"Nicholaus! Nicholaus!  
Wir ziehen dir . . ."

The voice ceased abruptly, but Earl was confused by what he had heard. His knowledge of German was slight, but it was sufficient to enable

him to understand that unquestionably the sailor was using his own language, and was threatening the Czar with some dire troubles.

Again the man began to sing, although it was impossible for Earl to determine just where he was standing. The sound still came in through the open port-hole,—

“Jeder Schuss  
Ein Russ’;  
Jeder Stoss  
Ein Franzos’;  
Jeder Schnitt  
Ein Britt’!”

Earl learned from the song that the singer was declaring that every shot meant the death of a Russian, every blow slew a Frenchman and every cut was vital to the men from Britain. Assuredly this was a strange song for a loyal Englishman to be singing on the high seas, he thought. Still the boy was perplexed more than he was alarmed. He listened and in a brief time again came the voice of the sailor,—

“Nieder mit Serbien!  
Russland muss sterben!  
Frankreich verderben!”

Earl was paying such strict attention that he was able to gather from the sentiment of the song that Servia must be overthrown, Russia must die and France must go to the dogs.

Once more he recalled the appearance of the captain and his crew as he had seen them on deck. It was still more difficult now for him to understand what the nature of the craft really was. Surely it had all the fittings of the ordinary trawler and the men were clad as he had seen the English fishermen. The voice of the captain, the faces of the men and the words of the songs he had just heard were confusing. However, if a keen suspicion had been aroused in the mind of the young American he was not prepared as yet to give it voice. Certainly it was strange that the captain should have insisted upon his being taken to the little cabin and kept there a prisoner.

Several hours elapsed and Earl's suspicions were not confirmed by any further events. The boat was moving slowly and stopping at frequent intervals. This, however, was only to be expected and the natural course for a trawler to follow.

At this time there was a sharp rap on the door and a moment later the key was turned in the lock. The sailor who had conducted him to his quarters now entered with a small tray on which some simple food was served. Earl was surprised to see even a tray on board the vessel, but the sight of the food caused him to forget most of his questionings.

“I am glad to see you,” he said heartily, as he took the tray from the hands of the man. Still

the sailor did not respond and his round stolid face was unchanged in its expression.

“How long am I going to be kept in here?” demanded Earl somewhat impatiently.

The man shook his head showing that he understood the question, but was either unable or not permitted to answer it.

“I don’t understand it,” repeated Earl. “I am neither an Englishman nor a German, and I certainly am not a trawler. I think I can promise to pay you or the captain if he will go ashore with me at Great Yarmouth.”

The sailor gave Earl a quick glance and then abruptly went from the room, once more locking the door of the cabin, as he withdrew.

Earl was not without hope that his promise to reward the captain if he would take him ashore would produce some effect. Eagerly he waited for the return of the sailor for some word to be brought him, but an hour elapsed and still no one came.

It was now late in the afternoon. From the direction in which the sunlight came through the port-hole Earl was convinced that the fishing boat was moving northward.

Was the boat really a trawler? And were the men sailors? In spite of their appearance Earl was by no means fully convinced that his suspicions were groundless. But if the men were

Germans and the vessel was not a trawler, what then could be the purpose served by the disguise?

As the American boy impatiently waited for some word to be brought him he still was unable to find a satisfactory answer for the question which now was becoming more and more vital.

## CHAPTER VII

### PRISONER OR PASSENGER

THE hours passed slowly and still no one came to the room in which Earl was confined. His impatience increased as the mystery of his retention in the little cabin was still not explained. He tried to think of all possible reasons for his imprisonment, but none of them satisfied him and at last he decided that he must strive to be contented until the captain of the trawler of his own accord should be willing to explain what it all meant.

Meanwhile the boat was moving slowly and steadily, as if either it was helping to draw a net or else was trying not to withdraw from the place where the crew were busy.

Peering again from the port-hole Earl was unable to discover any boats or men that were handling nets on that side of the ship.

The afternoon at last wore away and he was aware from the light that entered his little room that the day was almost gone. Not a sign of any shore had he been able to discover. Of course, he was aware that such a sight would be had only

if the boat was headed directly for land. The sound of the lapping waves was the only one he heard. The rays of the setting sun, reflected from the smooth waters, made his prison room light with its long rays.

No supper was brought Earl nor had any one for a long time come near his room. The boy now was suffering from thirst, but there was no way by which he could relieve it. He rapped loudly upon the door but no attention was given his appeal. He called in his loudest tones several times, but his voice either was unheard or his calls were disregarded.

At last, when darkness crept on, Earl, utterly weary and somewhat cast down in his mind, although he was as yet far from despairing, flung himself on the little bunk and soon was sleeping soundly.

When he awoke daylight had returned. Apparently too the day was bright and clear. It was early when Earl awoke, as he was able to see when he arose and once more looked out of the little port-hole. Still no shore was within sight. The surface of the North Sea was calm in the early morning light and as far as he could see the wide waters extended.

Apparently the boat was moving, but its progress was very slow. The odor of fish was now plainly manifest. Perhaps, he thought, the men

had made a heavy catch in the hours just before sunrise and had returned to the trawler with their boats filled.

He was still standing by the port-hole, eagerly watching the little waves as far as he could see them. Suddenly he saw, not more than one hundred yards distant, some men in a boat. They were hauling in their nets, he concluded, and he watched them with renewed interest. Apparently they were headed toward the trawler, but their actions were not like those of the ordinary fisherman.

As he excitedly watched them the question arose in Earl's mind whether or not the men really were fishing. If they were not engaged in that occupation something else of great interest held their attention. Several of the men were leaning over the bow of the whale boat. They were acting, too, as if another boat was not far away, but, try as he might, Earl was unable to discover where it was.

With increased interest he watched the men, but it was impossible for him to determine what their occupation was. He still thought they might be fishing, but they were acting strangely for men who were hauling in their seines.

Suddenly Earl saw the men in the boat all rise and after a momentary hesitation hastily seat themselves and grasp their oars. Instantly they

began to row, every man exerting himself apparently to the utmost of his strength. It was plain too that they were headed for the trawler, but in a few moments they had passed beyond his vision and it was no longer possible for him to see them.

Puzzled by the unexpected action, Earl still remained standing by the port-hole, peering out eagerly upon the waters before him. In a brief time he heard the sound of men running about the deck above him. To the perplexed boy it seemed as if some fresh source of excitement had been found. Had another gunboat appeared? Was the trawler threatened by the enemy?

In a brief time the speed of the fishing boat was increased. The trawler was moving over the water at a speed which Earl was soon convinced was much greater than that of the ordinary fishing craft.

And the speed was maintained. In his excitement Earl was positive that a quarter of an hour had elapsed and still the creaking and groaning of the laboring engine continued, and the sound of the waters through which the boat was speeding could be plainly heard.

Was the boat trying to escape from some pursuer? Or was she herself chasing some other boat? The confusion in Earl's mind was not cleared as he waited. He still stood by the port-

hole, looking out over the sea and listening for the well known sounds he almost expected and yet feared to hear.

Nor was the eager boy disappointed. A few moments later the roar of a great gun broke in upon the silence of the morning. If he might judge from the sound, the boat which had fired the gun was not very far distant.

Again there was confusion on the deck. The noise of men hurrying swiftly about once more was plainly audible.

A second shot quickly rang out and this was followed by still another.

Earl's excitement now was intense. He felt, as he expressed it to himself, that he was shut in like a rat in a trap. If the boat should be hit, there was no escape for him. He thought of the rush of the waters through the port-hole and of the vain struggles which he might make to batter in the door.

He was recalled to his immediate condition, however, by the fact that abruptly the engines of the trawler were reversed. The boat itself stopped, simply drifting with the current, and silence rested over the sea.

The roar of the great guns which he had heard convinced Earl now that whatever the former occupation of the trawler might have been she had been trying to escape. It was plain then that

some armed vessel was in pursuit. The ships doubtless had been firing across her bow and had compelled her to heave to.

Several times Earl felt in his pocket as if his missing watch must be there. How much time had elapsed he had no means of knowing and his impatience increased as he became aware of his helplessness. It was as impossible now for him to hear as it was for him to see what was occurring on deck. However, there was no question in his mind that matters of great importance were being enacted above him.

Striving to master his impatience, Earl waited a long time, or at least for what seemed an unusually long time to him. Occasionally he heard footsteps on the deck, but there was nothing to betray any unusual excitement.

How much time had elapsed he could not know when he discovered that the trawler again was moving. His thirst and his hunger alike were forgotten in the fresh excitement which now seized upon him. Whither was the boat bound? Was she the prize of some German cruiser?

It was impossible for him to find any answer to the perplexing questions. The boat still was proceeding steadily, although her speed was less than that at which she had been recently moving. The supreme question in the perplexed boy's mind now was whither she was going. What new ex-

periences awaited him when she should gain the shore?

No sound was heard except the regular throb-bing of the engine. Steadily the trawler pro-ceeded and Earl tried various methods of meas-uring the passing of the time. Afterward he smiled when he found that his mistake had been one of more than three hours.

At last, when he again looked out of the port-hole, he saw that he was not far away from shore. With increasing interest he watched until he soon was convinced that the scene by which he was passing was familiar. He recognized some of the docks now which could be seen only a few yards away.

“This is the River Yare,” he excitedly said to himself. “And the trawler is putting in at Great Yarmouth.”

It was easy for him to conclude that the boat was not a prisoner, if her name and purpose had been correctly stated. He had seen the name *Mermaid of Great Yarmouth* painted on the stern of the trawler before he had been taken on board.

Not long afterward, Earl concluded from the sounds he heard that the boat had arrived at her dock. This must be on the opposite side of the river, he was aware, for still from the port-hole he was able to look across the harbor.

His excitement now became keener. Soon he would be released and the mystery which had hung over the trawler would be cleared. Indeed it already seemed to the boy as if her mysterious actions in a large measure were explained, for the *Mermaid* now had returned to the place where she belonged.

His meditations were interrupted by strange sounds that came from the deck.

Apparently the unloading of the cargo of fish was neglected. There were a few sharp calls that could be distinctly heard and the movements of the men on deck were strangely uniform. Apparently no one was moving about alone.

Earl felt that he had been forgotten. Almost anything was easier to bear, he thought, than the uncertainty which now possessed him.

At last in desperation, he stood once more by the port-hole and looking out saw a man in a small craft not far away. The man was looking with manifest interest toward the dock and Earl was certain from his actions that something of special interest was occurring there.

“Tell the captain I am locked in,” shouted the excited boy. Apparently the man did not hear the hail and Earl repeated it three times, before he saw that he had aroused the attention of the stranger.

Manifestly the man was startled by the strange

call and was looking intently along the side of the trawler to find the place from which the unexpected hail had come.

"Here I am! Here!" shouted Earl again. "I am locked in the cabin. Tell the captain to send some one to let me out."

It was plain now that the stranger had located the spot from which the call for help had come. Earl was not positive that what he had said had been understood, but the man grasped his oars and leisurely rowed out of sight.

Other boats were passing, but though Earl did his utmost to arouse attention, apparently no heed was given him. The interest of every one was centered on the events that were occurring on the dock.

Almost in despair Earl threw himself upon his bunk, not knowing what next to do.

He was aroused by some one trying to open the door of his cabin. Instantly springing from the bunk, Earl called to the man outside. No answer was given, however, and at last it was clear that whoever was trying to enter did not possess a key by which to open the door. The attempts ceased and Earl concluded that the man had departed.

Again the troubled boy was keenly disappointed. He turned again to the port-hole, resolved to continue his efforts to attract the atten-

tion of those who might be passing on the river.

His interest, however, quickly was diverted when he heard the door open behind him. Turning abruptly about Earl was startled to see standing before him the young officer whom he had first met on board the torpedo-boat destroyer.

## CHAPTER VIII

### AN OFFER OF HELP

“**M**Y, I am glad to see you!” exclaimed the young American, impulsively, as he recognized his visitor.

The expression on the face of the young officer did not change and he stared blankly at the boy before him.

“Don’t you remember me? Do you know who I am?” said Earl eagerly.

“I cannot say that I do,” replied the sailor slowly. “I fancy you have the better of me.”

“Don’t you remember how you took me on board the destroyer? Don’t you remember giving me these clothes?”

“Surely I do,” replied the officer cordially. “At first I did not recognize you. The light in the cabin is not very distinct. But what are you doing here?”

“That’s just what I wanted to find out,” laughed Earl, relieved that now there was a prospect of release.

“In the first place tell me how you came to be on board this trawler.”

“When the destroyer got into her fight with that cruiser we pulled away. We didn’t know just where to go to get out of range, but we thought we ought to go somewhere.”

“And you were quite right,” said the officer soberly.

“Afterward, when we found that we were not anywhere near our friends, we didn’t know just what to do, but we started toward the shore. Pretty soon we were picked up by this trawler. I was taken down here and shut in this cabin. I don’t know just why, but I think I begin to understand. I do not know what was done with the other members of the crew of the yawl.”

“Why do you suspect the trawler?”

“I didn’t say that I had suspected her,” said Earl quickly, “but I am suspicious.”

“Of what?”

“I have heard the men singing German songs.”

“That’s most interesting,” said the officer. “Do you recall the songs you heard?”

“I think I might sing them,” said Earl lightly. “But tell me what the trawler is.”

The young officer looked at the boy keenly for a moment before he said, “This crew is German and the men were scattering mines in the North Sea.”

“You don’t mean it!” exclaimed Earl excitedly.

“Indeed I do mean it,” said the officer slowly. “We have brought the rascals into port, every one of them. I fancy it is somewhat fortunate for you that I can vouch for you, otherwise you might have had some difficulty in explaining your presence on board a German boat, disguised as a trawler.”

Great as was Earl’s surprise, he was too eager to depart from the little cabin in which he had been found to delay longer unless the officer had more to say.

“I fancy,” continued the sailor, “that you would do well to come with me while I explain to the captain just who you are and how you chanced to be here.”

Immediately obeying the suggestion, Earl followed his companion as he led the way to the deck of the destroyer. The fleet little craft was fast to the dock near by.

“Have you dug out another one?” inquired the captain gruffly, as the lieutenant approached with Earl. “The boat is as full of them as it is of rats.”

“I have found another one, but fortunately he does not belong to the crew.”

“Who is he?”

“He is an American lad.”

The captain was at no pains to conceal his skepticism, as he said, “The youngster will have

to explain what he was doing on board this craft."

"I can tell you all about him," said the young lieutenant, "at least I can tell you all I know."

Quickly the young sailor told of the accident which had befallen Earl and how he later was received on board the torpedo-boat destroyer.

Incredulous as the captain first appeared to be, he smiled as he said when the story had been told, "Have you anything to prove the statement?"

"He has his passport," said the lieutenant.

"I left my clothes on board here," said Earl quickly. "When I was picked up, of course everything I had on was wet, as I had been in the water a long time. The men made up a suit for me and that is the reason why I am wearing it now," Earl added ruefully, as he looked down at his ill-fitting clothes.

"Is his clothing on board now?" demanded the captain as he turned to the lieutenant.

"I shall see, sir," replied the young officer, saluting and turning upon his heel.

The captain of the destroyer was a man in middle life. His face was bronzed and reddened by many years of service. He was a sturdy man, bluff and gruff in certain of his ways, but Earl was convinced that behind the rough exterior was a heart that was not untouched by the misfortunes of others.

“Where is your home?” he demanded, as he turned to Earl.

“In New York, sir.”

“What are you doing here in war times?”

“I am not here because I want to be,” said Earl, as he proceeded to tell the story of the misfortunes which had befallen him and his brother, Leon.

“If your father was a wise man,” said the captain gruffly, “he would never send you on such a foolish errand as that. It is like sending the ax in after the wedge. When he had one boy, he had better keep him where he is safe and sound. The sooner you can sail for New York, the better for you, my friend.”

“But I cannot leave Leon. Besides, the last cablegram I had just told me to find him.”

“With all my heart I hope you are successful,” said the captain warmly. His manner, however, was not reassuring and Earl was positive that the bluff sea king had slight hope that success would crown his efforts.

At this time the lieutenant returned with some of the documents he had taken from Earl’s clothing which was now dry, having been cared for by the young officer himself.

“Here is his passport,” he said, turning to the captain and holding out the document as he spoke.

“I have not time to look into these matters,”

said the captain gruffly. "Perhaps the youngster would better take his chance with the others."

Nevertheless he looked carefully into the passport, marking the description which had been given of the color of Earl's eyes and hair, his stature and his age.

After he had looked through the document and compared the several details with the impression Earl produced upon him when he glanced at him, the captain turned to the young officer and for two or three minutes conversed with him in so low a voice that Earl was unable to hear what was said.

Apparently convinced that the young officer's statement was to be believed, the captain turned away, leaving Earl and the lieutenant by themselves for a moment.

"There is no money in my pockets," said Earl aghast, as he completed his investigation of his clothing. "It may have fallen out when I was in the water."

"No," replied the lieutenant, smiling slightly as he spoke. "I saved your purse and placed it with your passport in the purser's safe. Now, what do you plan to do?" he said.

"I have not changed my plan," said Earl quickly.

"And do you still intend to try to go to France to look for your brother?"

“I do.”

The young officer shook his head as once more he proceeded, “You are taking your life in your hands. Why do you not stay in London until some word has been received from your brother, or the war is ended?”

“My father told me to find him. Besides, there is no prospect that the war will end very soon.”

“It will be over shortly,” said the officer abruptly.

“According to all the reports the Germans are making a hard drive for Paris. They have been sweeping the Allies before them all the way from Belgium. They are not many miles away from Paris itself by this time, if the reports we see are to be believed.”

The face of the English officer flushed slightly as he said, “It is only the beginning, lad. Old England may be a little slow to take hold, but she is just as slow to let go.”

“I am not afraid of her letting go,” said Earl quickly. “I know how the British hang on. Of course you know more about it than I do, but I do not see how the war can stop very soon unless Germany captures Paris and scatters the army that is opposing it.”

“Just you wait and you shall soon see. Meanwhile what will you do if your brother comes to

England while you are gone to France searching for him?"

"He knows the name of the hotel where I am stopping and he will go at once to the American ambassador, who is a great friend of my father. I have left word at both places."

"And how do you plan to go to France and where will you go after you land?"

"I do not know how I can go unless the boats are running more regularly."

The officer smiled as he shook his head slightly and said, "I fancy you may have your troubles in securing passage. Meanwhile, may I ask if you intend to go wearing the clothes you now have on or whether you prefer to don your other suit?"

"I shall put on my other suit."

The officer shook his head as he said quietly, "I have hopes that I may be able to help you if you will continue to wear the clothing you now have."

"What for?" demanded Earl quickly.

"You may rest assured," said the officer, "that you will be in no danger and there are special reasons why I make the request. Indeed I may say to you that if you continue to wear that suit and are willing for me to accompany you, I think that I am safe in promising that I will secure passage for you soon from Portsmouth to Havre."

That is a longer voyage across the Channel than at some other points, but you will not be very far from Paris, and I fancy that is where you planned first of all to go."

"Yes, sir, that is where I wanted to go, but I do not understand why you want me to wear—"

"There are special reasons, my friend, and if you are desirous of going we will start for Portsmouth to-night."

"I certainly am desirous of going," said Earl quickly. "If you have a way by which you can help me across the Channel, I shall appreciate your kindness more than I can tell you."

"Say no more. Say no more," said the officer quickly. "You may remain on board a half-hour or more and I fancy I shall return by that time. Get your possessions together so that we may start at once."

Left to himself, Earl thought over the strange happenings of the last few hours. In America his life had been uneventful, and his most exciting times had been those in which the athletic contests of his school had been fought. And yet within the past few weeks he had been in peril of his life and associated with a man who had been taken and shot as a German spy.\*

Even after he had attempted to go to France to search for his brother his exciting experiences

\* See "The Search for the Spy."

had followed him. Surely his rescue from the English Channel and his presence on board a vessel disguised as a trawler and manned by a crew of Germans, who were scattering mines along the shore where the fishing fleets would be the first to strike them, ought to be enough to satisfy the cravings of any boy.

And Earl himself felt thoroughly "satisfied." He was eager now to be gone. The strange offer of the young officer to permit him to accompany him to Portsmouth was not easily explained. And yet Earl Platt was so eager to carry out his father's bidding and begin a search for his missing brother that the mystery of the offer did not long trouble him.

A half-hour later when the lieutenant returned, Earl was ready to depart with him.

## CHAPTER IX

### ANOTHER CROSSING

EARL'S belongings had been left on board the yacht on which he first had set sail from the English coast. It was not, therefore, difficult for him now to gather together what he was to take with him, as his possessions consisted merely of the suit he was wearing and the contents of its pockets.

In a brief time he and the young officer were seated in a compartment in a train which was bearing them swiftly toward the south. The young American had found the young naval officer gradually becoming more interested and personal in his conversation. Earl was not aware that this natural reticence was a part of the life of the British Isles. At first he had been inclined to think his companion was somewhat cold and indifferent, but this impression in a brief time gave place to one that was more correct, and the two young men were soon conversing almost as freely as if they had known each other a long time.

“What is to become of those trawlers?” inquired Earl.

“Do you mean the boats or the men?”

“Both, but especially the men,” laughed Earl.

“Do you refer to the men who were captured?”

“Yes.”

“Well,” said the young officer, “what do you fancy is likely to be their fate?”

“Will they be shot?”

“I cannot state positively what will be done with them but I venture the assertion that by to-morrow morning there will not be one of them left alive.”

“They ought to be shot,” said Earl warmly.

“I heartily agree with you. No civilized nation has ever been known to scatter mines in a sea over which neutral vessels are passing. Already Norwegian boats as well as Dutch and Danish have gone to the bottom. Naturally we expect the English and German ships to suffer, but it does not seem right nor is it in accordance with the rules of warfare, agreed to if not actually signed at The Hague Conference, that these mines should be scattered promiscuously over the sea.”

“Did Germany sign The Hague Treaty?”

“Certainly; at least in part.”

“Then she is going back on her word in this as much as she was when she violated the neutrality of Belgium.”

“I fancy you have replied to your own query.”

“I do not understand why you do not let me

change my clothes. What advantage is there in my wearing this outlandish garb that I have on?" Earl added as he glanced ruefully at his ill-fitting clothing.

"There is a special reason. I shall be glad to explain to you later, but just now I do not think I shall venture to say any more. You have no desire to stop in London, have you?"

"No, sir."

"Then we will continue directly on our way to Portsmouth."

Conversation ceased as the train drew into the great city. In a brief time Earl and his companion departed from the train and after securing a cab soon arrived at the station where they were to board their train for Portsmouth.

The ride through the south of England was new to Earl. With keen interest he looked from the windows of the car at the beautiful region through which they were swiftly passing.

There was an air of peace that rested over the entire countryside. The cattle and the sheep, many of which could be seen in the fields, all seemed to belong to a country in which war had not even entered the thoughts of the inhabitants.

There were great houses situated in the midst of extensive and beautifully cultivated farm lands. At times the swiftly moving train swept through quaint little hamlets and darted past churches

that had been erected hundreds of years before this time.

At last Earl said to his companion, "What a difference there is between the south of England and the north."

"Quite so."

"Is there the same difference between the people who live here and those who live in the north as there is between the two parts of the country?"

"Most assuredly. The people of the south of England are quiet and do not often change in their politics or opinions. In the north, there is much more manufacturing and the people are more concerned in politics and are ready for changes. Indeed, the north of England," continued the young officer, "is much more like America, I am informed, than is the south of England."

"I am told," said Earl, "that Portsmouth is the most important naval arsenal in Great Britain."

"It is. It has a harbor so large that all the boats in the British navy might be sheltered there at the same time. Naturally it is a place of great importance because it is quite near London and yet is not far from the shores of France. The navy yard there, too, is of great importance. If it were possible I should be glad to take you to the dry docks so that you might see some of the great men-of-war."

Upon their arrival at Portsmouth, Earl found the statement of his companion confirmed. There was an air of seriousness manifest throughout the city and it was impossible for any stranger to come anywhere near the dockyard or the arsenal. Soldiers in their bright colored uniforms were to be seen about the streets and far outnumbered the sailors. Earl suspected what he afterwards learned was true, that many of the vessels in the fleet had been withdrawn from Portsmouth and sent to the North Sea, where it was expected by many of the English people that a terrific naval engagement between Great Britain and Germany would soon take place.

Earl's companion explained to him on their way to the dock that many refugees from the various European countries where they had been caught when the war broke out, were now making their way to Paris and thence to the coast cities of the English Channel. Once there, they were being transported to England. From the latter country it was now considered safe to attempt the voyage across the sea. The English fleet was guarding the various lanes of traffic, and business with America was being rapidly resumed.

“How far is it across the Channel to Havre?” inquired Earl.

“A little over one hundred miles. We shall not start until to-night and in the morning you

will doubtless see the shores of France when you first awake."

At once making their way to the dock from which their little boat was to sail, they found the place filled with men and women who had just been landed. Most of them were Americans and among them some were being helped because they had passed through very trying experiences before they had found safety on the English shore. Indeed, Earl was deeply interested in the story which two American men were relating to a third that stood near him.

"Yes," said one of them, "we were both arrested in Munich as spies. Unfortunately I had just taken a picture of a Zeppelin that was flying over the city. That was sufficient to get me into all kinds of trouble. The civil judge was courteous and kind, but when he turned us over to the military authorities, as he was bound to do, then our troubles began. When they marched us off to prison I turned to say something to my friend here, who was very much cast-down, and the major told me to 'shut up,' and he said that if I spoke again he would shoot me as he would a dog. When we came near the prison I stepped a little out of line and then he told me that if I moved a foot to either side he would order the twelve soldiers, who were conducting us, to shoot us on the spot."

“Yes,” joined in his companion, “our experiences were hard enough. At least I thought so when we were thrown into a dark cell in which there was nothing except a little straw. The first night we could not sleep any because the rats were chasing over us all night long. There was a little slit in the wall and every little while it would be opened and a light would be turned on us. Sometimes we could see the shining eyes of the man who was spying upon us. We got away at last, and I am more thankful than I have ever been in my life for anything before that we are now on English soil.”

“You will be still more thankful,” said his companion lightly, “when you step foot on the soil of the United States.”

“Indeed, I shall,” said the first stranger eagerly. “And if I ever am fortunate enough to get back there, you will have to pry me loose to get me away. I shall be like a man who has taken hold of the handles of a galvanic battery. He may want to let go, but he doesn’t know how.”

“Talking about spies,” resumed the other man, “I met a young student in Munich. He and I became very close friends. We used to take long walks about the city and even far out into the country. He was a young Russian, about twenty years old. One day he and another friend were walking along the country road outside the city,

when they were seized by some of the soldiers and searched. They must have found something that frightened them for both men were stood up along the roadside and shot. I have not recovered from the shock of it even yet."

Earl's own anxiety was such that the stories to which he was an inadvertent listener increased his fear for his brother. Leon was an impulsive lad and not given unduly to silence, thought Earl. What perils might beset him could only be conjectured. He was not without hope that when he should arrive at St. Germain, where his uncle dwelt, that he might find his missing brother there.

The thought was stimulating and once more strengthened the determination of Earl to do all in his power to discover what had befallen his twin brother.

After a brief time had elapsed, Earl and the young officer were received on board the boat. There were only a few passengers to be seen, as most of the traffic was in people who were escaping through France to England.

The thought of what he might learn when he should arrive at his uncle's home had once more stimulated Earl's feeling of confidence. He was hopeful that his search would soon be ended and that he would be permitted to return with Leon to England and speedily set sail for home. In-

deed, the strong desire in Earl's heart now, in spite of his deep interest in all that was occurring about him, was to return to America.

"We are going to have a nasty night of it," said Earl's companion soon after the ship left the dock.

Earl did not respond. From the place where he was standing on the deck he saw that a mist almost like rain had settled over the Channel and that the sea was becoming steadily rougher. He was not altogether comfortable where he was and unwilling for his companion to see what he suspected soon was likely to befall him, he went into the saloon and there seated himself in one of the easy chairs.

His feeling of discomfort, however, increased, and in a few moments he retired to a stateroom where he threw himself at full length upon the bunk.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SHOT OF THE LIEUTENANT

**S**O wretched was the young American that he was only dimly aware of the entrance of his companion some time later. The boat rolled and tossed throughout the voyage across the Channel and relief came to Earl only when in the early morning he was aware that the steamer had been made fast to the dock.

Quickly recovering from his sufferings of the night, Earl said to the lieutenant, "I do not know just why you have wanted me to wear these togs. I have done it because I thought you had some good reason for asking me to keep them on. We must be in France now and I do not want to wear them any longer."

"Nor do I care to have you wear them again."

"Why did you want me to wear them, anyway?"

"Perhaps some time I will explain that to you, but for the present I prefer not to do so. I fully appreciate your courtesy in granting my request."

"I do not know your name," said Earl abruptly.

"Quite so."

“Aren’t you going to tell me what it is?”

“If you wish. My name is Garnold.”

“And you are a lieutenant?”

“I am.”

“Then why don’t you wear your uniform?”

“There are excellent reasons for my donning a civilian’s suit.” Even as he spoke the lieutenant, who had risen from his bunk, looked carefully to a huge automatic pistol which he drew from his belt and thoroughly inspected before he returned it to its place. The weapon was a formidable one, but its presence on the body of the young officer was concealed. To any one whom he might meet he presented the appearance of an ordinary, self-contained young Briton.

“So we are here at Havre, are we?” said the lieutenant a moment later as he looked out of the port-hole. “I fancy you did not have a very agreeable night.”

Earl made a wry face, but did not directly respond to the suggestion. He was already interested in the sight of the crowds upon the dock. Later, he learned that many of these people had been standing there all through the night.

In a brief time, Earl and his companion departed from the boat and as they made their way through the throngs of people, they saw depicted on their faces the records of stirring and hard experiences.

Obtaining a simple breakfast in a restaurant not far away, Earl and his companion were soon ready for their further experiences.

The boy had not thought that they would attempt to go otherwise than by train to Paris. His surprise, therefore, was great when the lieutenant said to him, "I have secured a small motor-car. It has just room for two. I shall be glad if you will accompany me in my journey to Paris. Somehow I fancy we shall have less difficulty going by motor than we will if we attempt to go by train. The railway is badly congested and there are many people who are almost irresponsible, they are so crazed by fear and their desire to leave this country."

"Have you heard anything more about the German army since we landed?"

"I hear they are pushing toward Paris," said the young officer somewhat bitterly. "And just as sure as the sun is to rise we shall turn them out and drag them down in the end."

"How far have they come down the coast?" asked Earl.

"There are reports that the Uhlans have come even this side of Boulogne."

"For all we know," said Earl, "they may be here in Havre."

"Hardly," said the young officer. "I fancy they would have two thoughts before they ven-

tured as far as that from their main body. It is a shame that I must leave my ship for a little while and go to Paris, but there is no escape. I must, therefore I am on my way. If you have finished your breakfast we will go out and start in our car at once. I have given orders for it to be driven here."

"I am ready."

"Have you your passport and all your possessions?" inquired the lieutenant anxiously.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, examining his pockets once more to assure himself that his purse, his letter of credit and his passport were all in his possession.

When Earl accompanied the lieutenant to the place where the small automobile was awaiting him, he was surprised to see several French officers standing about the car, apparently waiting for its owner to appear.

There was a brief conversation between the lieutenant and these men, but as it was carried on in French and the words were spoken in a low voice, Earl was unable even to hear or understand all that was said. Several times he was aware that the soldiers were looking keenly at him, but the word of his companion appeared to be sufficient and there was no delay in their departure.

The lieutenant himself was to drive the car and

they had not gone far on their way before Earl was convinced that his companion was an expert.

The entire country was new to the young American, and with keen interest he was observing the people and places they passed. He was surprised at the numbers of soldiers he saw. Why they should be in this part of France, when the battles were occurring farther north, he could not understand. The soldiers appeared to be active and energetic, though the men whom he saw were much smaller than he had expected to see. In contrast with the huge Scotchmen and the large men in some of the regiments he had seen marching through London, the Frenchmen seemed to be quite small. And yet he was aware of the wonderful reputation the French soldiers had gained for courage and their ability to maintain a long, swinging march over a vast extent of country.

"I must stop at Elbea," explained the lieutenant. "I hope I shall not long be delayed there and then we shall push forward for Paris."

"I am not expecting to go right to the city," explained Earl.

"Why not?" demanded the lieutenant sharply, as he glanced keenly at the boy.

"Because my uncle lives at Faubourg St. Germain."

"Why do you stop there?"

"I must see him before I see any one else. If

he has received any word of my brother or can give me any information as to where I may find him, I shall save myself many difficulties."

"You will save yourself many more if you will turn squarely about and go back to England with me."

Earl smiled but did not respond, and for several miles the car sped forward, running smoothly and swiftly and responding wonderfully to the demands of its skillful driver.

The road they were following at times led close to the bank of the Seine. In other places Earl found himself passing richly cultivated fields or darting through stretches of woodland. Several times they had been stopped by the authorities to explain who they were and whither they were bound. The document which the lieutenant possessed, fortunately secured prompt permission for them to go on their way; and as Earl was the lieutenant's companion no inquiries were made concerning him except once when he was required to show his passport.

They had just entered one of the frequent stretches of woods when there was a loud explosion and both occupants of the car were aware that a blow-out had occurred in one of their rear tires.

An exclamation of impatience escaped Earl's lips, but his companion, with true British fortitude,

tude, gave no voice to his disappointment and at once started to repair the damage. Both laid aside their coats and rolling up their sleeves prepared to remove the useless tire and replace it by another which was carried in the rear of the car. They worked rapidly and in a brief time the offending tire was removed.

Abruptly the young lieutenant stood erect and looked keenly at some bushes a few yards away. Drawing his pistol he advanced a few feet and in a loud voice demanded, "Who is there?"

No response was given his hail, although Earl, who now was keenly excited, was convinced that he had seen a movement among the bushes.

Speaking in French the officer again demanded who was hiding in the bushes and declared that if no response was given he would immediately fire.

True to his word, when his second call was disregarded, the young officer leveled his pistol and fired at the bushes.

A loud scream followed the report and Earl was tempted to dart into the woods which extended a short distance between the road and the bank of the river. He overcame the impulse, however, and in great excitement watched the lieutenant, who now coolly advanced toward the place from which the cries were still to be heard.

As he drew near, three men suddenly leaped out

from the bushes and one of them instantly fired upon the approaching officer.

Fortunately Lieutenant Garnold was not hurt. Disregarding his danger, he quickly started toward the men, firing as he ran.

Earl saw one man drop to the ground and lie motionless in the road. By this time, however, several soldiers appeared upon the scene, though Earl was unable to perceive even the direction from which they had come.

Instantly they started in pursuit of the fleeing men who now ran swiftly across the field, apparently trying to gain the shore of the river.

The lieutenant and three of the soldiers were in full pursuit of the fugitives. Shots were fired twice but apparently without avail for the men still continued their flight.

Meanwhile, several more soldiers had appeared in the road and approaching the place where Earl was standing they excitedly and with many gestures tried to ascertain the cause of the commotion.

Fortunately one of the soldiers was able to understand English and when Earl related what had occurred he turned quickly to his companions and interpreted what the young American had said.

“Did you see some more men?” inquired the Frenchman.

"All I saw was the three, but there was one whom the lieutenant shot. The others are trying to make for the river."

The French soldier once more turned to his companions and gave them several hurried commands which caused the men to scatter. Some moved down the road, others started back over the way by which Earl had come and then at the word of the leader the remainder all turned in swift pursuit of the lieutenant and the fleeing men.

It was fortunate for the young officer that help was at hand, for at this time the two fugitives had arrived near the place they were seeking and had turned upon their pursuer.

The sight of the additional party, however, seemed to deter them from further attempts to defend themselves.

Quickly they gained the bank of the river and leaping on board a small gasoline launch immediately started up the stream.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE MOTOR BOAT ON THE SEINE

“STOP!” shouted the excited lieutenant. “Stop, or I shall shoot again.” He was not aware that he was speaking in a language which doubtless was unfamiliar to the men who were trying to escape, whether they were German or French.

“Stop!” shouted the officer once more. As no heed was given his demands, again Lieutenant Garnold raised his pistol and fired. The launch, however, was going swiftly and was too far away by this time to be an easy target.

And the launch was marvelously swift. Earl, who had been in several races with a launch which he and his brother owned, had never seen such speed as was displayed by the departing boat. Over its stern the waters seemed almost to be boiling.

Apparently the escaping men were not alarmed for their safety, and were relying upon the speed of their swiftly moving craft. If Earl had been on board and had seen how the little boat was protected by sheets of steel his surprise would have been still keener.

Before the lieutenant and Earl turned toward the roadside, where their automobile had been stranded, they were joined on the bank by a dozen or more soldiers. Where these men had come from Earl could not understand. He had not seen any one near the spot when the discovery of the spies had been made. And here they were, a dozen or more, almost as if they had sprung out of the earth and were ready for immediate action.

One young officer, who appeared to be the natural leader of the little band, at once hailed Lieutenant Garnold and a conversation was carried on in French. Earl was surprised by the calmness of the French soldiers. He had often been told how impulsive the French people were and how they manifested their excitement by many shakes of their shoulders and gesticulations with their hands. Now, however, all these men were quiet in their manner and if they were keenly excited they successfully concealed their feelings.

The conversation between the two young officers lasted only a brief time and was followed by a quick action on the part of the Frenchman.

Giving directions to his followers they scattered as if by some prearranged plan. The officer himself remained until his men had departed and then after a few more words ran swiftly toward a nearby house.

"The officer thinks," said Lieutenant Garnold to Earl, "that if three spies are here there may be more, especially if they came in the launch."

"They must have come in it."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because they knew right where it was hidden and started for it the moment they got into trouble."

"Quite so," said the young Englishman. "Really, I had not thought of that, you know. And the launch will receive on board several in addition to the three men whom we saw. I told the lieutenant about the man who fell after I shot him and he has sent a detachment to look after him."

"Where are all these men going?" inquired Earl.

"They are to scour the country. They have gone in different directions and the lieutenant himself is telephoning ahead so that men will be on the lookout for the boat. He suggests that you and I take a little motor boat which he says is in the boat-house over there." As he spoke Lieutenant Garnold pointed to a little boat-house on the bank, only a few yards distant from the place where they were standing.

"Do you care to go with me?" he added.

"Indeed I do. I should like nothing better."

“Then just as soon as the lieutenant returns with the key we will start. By telephoning ahead he will have men on the lookout and if others are working in advance of the rascals and we follow in a motor boat we ought to catch them somewhere.”

“We surely shall, but we are losing time. Why doesn’t the lieutenant bring his key before he telephones?”

“Quite likely he considers the telephoning fully as important. By getting word to some of the little towns it will be impossible for the rascals to pass without being discovered. Men can be stationed to watch.”

“Yes,” suggested Earl, “but they may run ashore between the towns.”

“Indeed, and that is so,” said the Englishman. “How remarkably fertile you Americans are in suggestions.”

“Have you any idea who these men are?”

“I am confident they are German spies.”

“Well, what are they doing out here, so far away from the army?”

“I suspect,” said the young Englishman solemnly, “that they are trying to discover what plans are being formed in this part of France.”

“Quite likely,” laughed Earl. “That is what spies usually do, isn’t it?”

“It is their usual occupation.”

"But what makes you think they are German spies?"

"This young officer is convinced that that is what they are."

"The Germans certainly have a marvelous system of spying."

"Indeed they have."

"I have had some experiences myself. London certainly is afraid. I know, for I had some dealings with a spy."

"You did! Pray how was that?"

Earl briefly related his experiences with the organized body of spies, the first of whom he had seen when he had been crossing the Atlantic in the steamship *Gallic*.

"I fancy," said the lieutenant, "that it is the fear of the spies which has made the officials and the London government hold so many of the aliens. Have you ever gone to the Olympia?"

"Yes, sir. That is, if you mean that great steel and glass pavilion where they used to have the horse shows and the military tournaments."

"The very place."

"I went there one time with Captain—" Earl checked himself hastily, aware that it was not expected that he would repeat the names of the men with whom he had been associated in his adventures with the spies. "I went with a captain," he repeated. "I saw about six hundred

Germans, Austrians and Hungarians there. They did not all look as if they might be spies, but evidently the government thought it would be wiser to keep them under key while the war is on."

"Quite so. There are usually about six hundred in the Olympia and although more are brought there every day there are sufficient drafts sent to the detention camps in the country to reduce the number."

"How many 'aliens,' as you call them, do you suppose are in the United Kingdom?"

"I cannot say. I have heard the estimate ranged from 50,000 to 80,000, including the women and children. Most of the better classes have received police permits to remain at liberty if they report at stated times to the police stations."

"I did not know there were any like that," said Earl.

"Indeed there are. Many of them continue in their employment, but as the war feeling grows stronger there are fewer of these clerks, teachers, governesses and servants permitted to remain at large. The German Government appropriated about \$50,000 for the release of Germans in England, but that is a small sum for so many. That is the explanation of the gathering of most of the unemployed and the penniless into the various detention camps. There they can be fed as well as watched."

"It was funny," said Earl. "When I was at the Olympia the prisoners were running after each other and shouting like schoolboys at recess."

"Quite so. The asphalt floor of the Olympia is the largest under one roof in London. These prisoners are mighty fortunate in having such abundance of space for exercising."

Earl was surprised at the calmness of his companion. He had shot a man, who was suspected of being a spy, and he had not even gone to investigate. The care of the fallen man, whether he was a German or Frenchman, was left to the squad of soldiers.

Indeed, Earl was more and more puzzled to account for the presence of the young naval officer in France. Apparently, however, in the errand upon which he had come, haste was not its first requisite. Earl was becoming very much attached to the quiet young officer, who like most Englishmen, somewhat reserved at first had gradually responded to the interest of his impulsive young companion until now he was conversing freely on many topics.

The young American's knowledge of French, as we know, was exceedingly limited, and consequently he was unable to understand the conversation which took place when the young French officer returned to the bank of the Seine.

It was speedily clear, however, that there was

to be no delay. The energetic officer was as eager to be about his own task as he had been to send his men on their various errands.

Lieutenant Garnold in a few words explained to Earl that the lieutenant had requested them to start at once in the launch, which already that officer was pushing out from the little boat house nearby.

"But I am not armed," protested Earl. "I haven't even a pistol."

"Mine will be sufficient," said the officer. "You will not lose any time as you will be directly on your way toward your uncle's home and at the same time you may be of some assistance to us. I know what your feeling toward our enemy is."

Elated as well as excited by the invitation, Earl readily consented and in a brief time he and his companions were on board the little motor boat and were speeding swiftly over the waters of the Seine, following the direction in which the men who had escaped had gone.

"This is a beauty!" said Earl enthusiastically, when he seated himself near the lieutenant, who was steering the boat.

"I shall be grateful," said that officer, "if you will limit your conversation and give much of your time to looking out for the boat we are pursuing. If you see any other signs of danger or of

anything being wrong I shall expect you to inform me at once.”

Smiling at the somewhat smug manner of his companion, Earl readily assented and devoted his attention as he had been requested.

For ten minutes, under full speed, the little launch swept over the waters of the famous river. The experience was all novel to Earl and he was highly interested in everything he saw.

In the midst of it all, however, was the main purpose of the pursuit. He was watchful of the banks which they passed, all the time looking for signs of the presence of the launch which had preceded them.

A half-hour passed, however, before the monotony of the voyage was interrupted. Then it was, unable to repress his excitement, Earl turned to the lieutenant and rising as he spoke, said, “Look yonder, will you! Just see that! What do you make of it?”

## CHAPTER XII

### A LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY

**S**TARTLED by the low exclamation of his companion, the young lieutenant glanced hastily in the direction indicated by Earl.

Not far from the river was a stone bridge or culvert, over a little stream which found its way into the Seine. Across this little bridge, even while he was looking at it, the lieutenant saw two trains swiftly passing. It was not, however, the sight of the cars but the actions of two men who could be seen darting swiftly to the shelter beneath the bridge that instantly arrested his attention.

Naturally there was nothing alarming in the mere fact that two men were entering the open space, but taken in connection with the recent discovery of the spies and the exciting pursuit which had followed, the suspicions of the lieutenant were instantly aroused.

“Can you see anywhere the launch we are pursuing?” he hastily demanded of Earl.

The young American looked long and carefully along both banks but was unable to discover the

presence of the little boat they were seeking. Shaking his head, he said, "I cannot see the boat anywhere, but it may have been hidden somewhere."

"Do you think these men are worth stopping for?"

"Yes," said Earl promptly. "In a time like this any man who acts suspiciously ought to be watched."

"We shall lose time, if we stop here."

"Not very much," replied Earl. "The culvert can't be more than one hundred and fifty feet back from the river."

Not another word was spoken as the lieutenant turned the bow of the launch toward the shore, at a place where there was a landing or low dock.

Standing on the bow ready to leap ashore, Earl was the first to land and quickly made the boat fast.

Without hesitation he joined the lieutenant when both started swiftly along the shore of the little brook, making their way toward the place where the two suspected men had been seen.

"My impression is," said the lieutenant, when half the distance had been covered, "that it will be better for you to go around to the other side and approach the bridge from that direction. You can cross the railroad track a little above the bridge, although I fancy the men would not

be able to see you, as they are under the mason-work."

Acting at once upon the suggestion Earl hastily ran to the railroad, crossing the tracks and running to the bank of the stream about one hundred feet from the bridge. Then retracing his way he proceeded cautiously toward the place which both he and the lieutenant were seeking.

Earl Platt, whose life up to the present summer had been uneventful, was convinced, as he moved cautiously along the bank, that few American boys had passed through such exciting experiences as those in which he had shared within the past few weeks. And his present adventure was by no means the least of all. It was possible, indeed it was quite probable, that the two men might be workmen on the railroad. In that event the position of himself and the young officer would not only be open to comment but to ridicule.

However, the very fact that spies had been discovered, hidden beneath bushes by the roadside and that two men had escaped in a little launch of marvelous speed, confirmed him in his conviction that at least the actions of these men should be investigated.

Cautiously he drew near the place, unable now to see his companion approaching from the other side. Apparently the men under the culvert were not maintaining a careful watch. This fact

strengthened the possibility of their being workmen. But Earl was determined now to find out what the exact condition was.

There was a slight bend in the stream on each side of the bridge. It was therefore impossible for him to look into the open space until he was almost before it. Already he had lost sight of the lieutenant who was approaching from the opposite side, but as Earl prepared to advance and peered cautiously into the place, he was startled by loud shouts and an instant later by the report of a pistol.

Darting swiftly toward the bridge he saw two men approaching from the side which Lieutenant Garnold was facing.

The sight of the officer caused the men instantly to turn and try to escape on the opposite side. The discovery of Earl near the bridge and on the bank of the little stream was sufficient to cause both men to hesitate an instant. Then, moved as by a common impulse, they climbed the bank and started swiftly down the track. As the men appeared on Earl's side the lieutenant shouted in his loudest tones and Earl quickly joined in an effort to arouse the attention of any soldiers who might be in the vicinity.

At the same time the lieutenant discharged his revolver several times, failing to hit the men and perhaps not planning to shoot them.

At all events, an alarm in the immediate vicinity was raised and in a brief time men could be seen approaching swiftly from several directions. Among these were a half-dozen or more soldiers, at the head of whom was the young French officer, who since he had landed from the little boat, had instantly run to a building not far away. It was plain too that he was thoroughly familiar with the entire region and it was at his suggestion that Earl and the lieutenant had started toward the culvert.

Motioning to show that the men were behind him, Lieutenant Garnold indicated to the young officer the need of swift action in the opposite direction.

Instantly the soldiers turned and started at their highest speed along the railroad.

Only a brief time elapsed before there was a shout, and, although Earl was unable to see what was occurring, the men in advance of him had leaped down the bank and had run to a barn that stood nearby. There were sounds of shouts and shots and before Earl could gain the place where the exciting event was occurring, he saw the soldiers come out of the building with two men in their midst who plainly were prisoners.

“We will go back to the culvert,” said Lieutenant Garnold, “and see if we can find anything suspicious there.”

In silence the entire party made its way to the bridge. After a hasty inspection the lieutenant held up a stick of dynamite and a bomb.

“See what these men had!” he said excitedly. “They were trying to blow up the railroad.”

A conversation in German followed between the French lieutenant and his two prisoners. It was manifest to Earl that both men were Germans although neither was dressed in the garb of a soldier.

Even in the midst of his excitement, Earl thought once more of the systems of spying which Germany had employed. Even in the west of France, far away from the battle line, these men were busily at work.

A part of the conversation he was able to understand and he was aware from the brief replies of the men, as well as from the rising anger of the young officer, that serious consequences were likely to follow their bold attempt to destroy the railroad and the bridge.

Not more than three minutes had elapsed when the conversation abruptly ended, and, speaking sharply in French to the soldiers who had accompanied him, the young lieutenant gave several explicit orders.

Earl was not able to understand all that he said, but the immediate response of the soldiers

indicated only too plainly what their orders were.

Four men advanced and placing their hands upon the shoulders of the two prisoners they pushed them into a position in which they stood with their backs against the masonwork of the bridge. There a careful search of their clothing was made, but aside from some matches, an English newspaper and some knives, nothing was found.

The eyes of the two Germans now were securely bound with handkerchiefs and the French soldiers then withdrew about fifteen feet. The soldiers were re-formed and at the word from the lieutenant all raised their rifles to their shoulders and fired at the two captured spies.

The reports of the guns rang out together. There was a moment of awful suspense, in which Earl leaned forward, staring at the unfortunate prisoners. One had crumpled and fallen to the ground, as a piece of paper is crumpled in one's hand. The other was still standing. So close had been the soldiers when they had fired that the clothing of this man had caught fire.

In consternation, Earl stared at the victim, fearful that the order to fire would be repeated. Still ignoring his peril, apparently unaware that he had been hit, the spy reached with his hand to try to put out the burning places in his coat and vest.

In broken English he kept repeating, "I vill burn!"

The horror of the scene had almost made Earl's feelings numb. The man who had fallen without a struggle was now motionless. Without doubt the man who was shouting that his clothing had been set on fire had been wounded but whether or not the wounds were fatal was not yet manifest. "I vill burn! I vill burn!" repeated the wretched man. Then, as he reached forth his hand in his efforts to put out the fire in his coat and vest, he suddenly collapsed and in a heap fell to the ground.

Glad to turn away from the sickening sight, Earl quickly rejoined the lieutenant when he said, "We will go back to the river, though I am not sure that we shall ever find the boat we were chasing."

Not a word was spoken on the way and Earl was scarcely aware when he stepped on board that the young French officer had not rejoined them. The incident had been so horrible and new to the young American that even after the launch had started he was scarcely aware of the direction in which they were moving.

Several minutes elapsed before a word was spoken and then the lieutenant said, "Do not let it get on your nerves, lad. It is one of the things

that must happen. War is no game for school-girls."

"So I see," replied Earl. "It doesn't seem to me to be much of a game for men either. I am wondering how many of these poor fellows who have been shot know what it is they are fighting for."

"Do not think of it."

"That is easily said. I am afraid that to my dying day, whenever I shut my eyes I shall see that awful sight at the bridge."

"You will not," said the officer, smiling. "Besides if you were to see it, you ought to think of the worse sight you might have seen if those rascals had succeeded in blowing up the bridge and destroying the railroad. The train load of your countrymen or mine would have been wrecked and doubtless most of them would have been killed if the train had gone through the bridge."

"Yes, that is the other side of it."

"You had better be singing than sighing," said the lieutenant kindly. "Do you know, 'It's a long way to Tipperary'?"

"I don't think I will have to sing it," said Earl, smiling slightly as he spoke. "Listen, there is somebody singing it now."

From a long, low building on their right near the shore, to the tune of the song which was more

and more becoming the war-song of the British and French soldiers, some one was singing,—

“Il y a bein loin d’ici a Tipperary.  
C’est un ch’min bien long a faire!  
Quoiqu’il m’attende au bout du trajet  
La plus belle petite fille de la terre!  
Adieu donc, mon cher vieux Piccadilly,  
Adieu donc, Leicester Square!  
Je vous quitte pour me rendre en Tipperary,  
Car c’est lui qui m’est le plus cher!”

The young lieutenant stared blankly into the face of his young companion and in his most serious manner said, “Ah, but that is not a French song. I heard it myself in London and those were not the words.”

Somewhat as a relief to the tense nerves of the anxious boy, Earl laughed repeatedly at the blank expression on the officer’s face and the serious manner in which he had declared that the song was English and that the French had no right to translate it and use it in their own language.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SWIFT CAR

“**I**FANCY it will be wiser for us to land here a moment and make some inquiries,” suggested the lieutenant.

Acting upon his own suggestion, he quickly guided the speedy craft to a small low dock near the right bank.

Not far away was the long, low house from which the song had been heard. A row of poplar trees partly concealed the outlines of the building. And yet Earl and his companion were able to see the little hamlet beyond the trees. Plainly the house was on the outskirts of a little village. Sentinels repeatedly had been met since Earl and Lieutenant Garnold had departed from Havre. Some of these had been stationed on the bank of the river, but more were on the borders of the little villages or larger towns along the road.

As Earl came nearer the house he smiled as part of the song again was heard.

“Adieu donc, mon cher vieux Piccadilly,  
Adieu donc, Leicester Square!  
Je vous quitte pour me rendre en Tipperary,  
Car c'est lui qui m'est le plus cher!”

The indignation of the young lieutenant over the appropriation of the song which was so distinctively British in its words and spirit was amusing to his companion. Earl expected to hear another outburst, but it was plain that the thoughts of the lieutenant now were directed to the men who might be inside the building.

Whether the place was an inn or not it was impossible to see, as the approach was from the rear.

In a few moments Earl and the lieutenant arrived at the door and as it was open at the time, they stepped within the room from which the sound of the voices of the men within still was coming.

About a table, in what apparently was the kitchen of the large house, a half-dozen men clad in the uniform of the French infantry were seated.

Apparently they were enjoying themselves and fear of an approaching enemy was not manifested by any one. Indeed, the soldiers were not much more than boys. Their mirth, however, instantly stopped as the strangers stood in the doorway. Every man reached for his gun and for a moment Earl's alarm was keen. The men before him seemed to be so ready for immediate action that there was a possibility of the lieutenant not being able to explain why they were there.

A sergeant, who apparently was the leader of the party, quickly addressed Lieutenant Garnold in French and the replies which he received plainly satisfied him, for in broken English he said, "Be seated." Turning to Earl, whom the lieutenant had explained to be an American, with a low bow and a wide sweep of his hand he said, "Be sitted in the American chair," pointing as he spoke to a monstrous chair in one corner of the room.

"I haf been to America," he explained. "I haf veesit your beautiful ceeties. America is most dear to my heart," he added, as he placed his hand over the region which that organ was supposed to occupy in his body. His companions, however, were unmoved, and in silence watched the two strangers, plainly not yet convinced that they were entirely to be trusted.

"Have you seen a motor boat passing on the river?" inquired Lieutenant Garnold.

"I haf not."

"There was one that came up the river and in it were some German spies."

Instantly the manner of the sergeant changed. No longer gesticulating, he eagerly inquired, "How many men were in it?"

"Two anyway, perhaps more. And not far back from here two were shot for trying to blow up the railroad. I shot one myself about five miles farther back when we first found them.

They were hidden under the bushes by the side of the road.”

“We must take those spies,” exclaimed the young Frenchman in a low voice; “we must not detain you. Perhaps you like to have some of my men go with you?”

“Not yet. No,” replied the lieutenant. “I heard the words of a song in here and I thought perhaps some English or Irishmen were here.”

“There are some English at Elbea,” explained the Frenchman.

“That will not do me any good,” replied the lieutenant gruffly. “I heard you singing a song that sounded very much like one of our English songs.”

“Indeed, it is,” said the sergeant quickly. “It is an English song. I heard it myself in a music hall in London. It is sung by an Irishman. It is one grand song,— ‘Loin d’ici a Tipperary.’ ”

It was difficult for the young lieutenant to repress entirely the feeling of irritation he felt over the appropriation of a song which to him seemed to be distinctively British. However, he said, “If there is nothing more for us to do here we must be going on.”

“I will go with you,” said the sergeant, “as far as the boat.”

Earl, who was in advance of the two men, as he came to the little dock to which they had made

the motor boat fast turned abruptly to his companions and shouted before they had come near, "Our boat is gone!"

"That is impossible," said the lieutenant, nevertheless quickly joining the young American.

"Whether it is impossible or not, the boat is not here," maintained Earl. "You can see for yourself."

Speechless with astonishment the young English officer looked in all directions, but no trace of the missing boat was to be found. He even peered into the depths of the river as if he suspected that the motor-boat had been sunk.

"It ees gone," said the sergeant. "It is most strange. How shall any one steal that boat when I am so near?"

Lieutenant Garnold turned and glared upon the Frenchman as if there had been some personal reference in his words to the power the sergeant was supposed to possess.

"What shall you do now?" continued the sergeant.

"We must get another."

"But there ees no other. You shall see for yourself."

"I do not see who took it," said the lieutenant soberly, once more peering intently along the bank of the Seine.

"If you shall see who took it we shall get heem,"

said the sergeant eagerly. "He shall surely not get away some more. But you do not see him. He is not here, he is gone."

"It is very strange," protested the lieutenant. "Indeed, it is most extraordinary. I did not hear the engine and I cannot understand how any one could take the boat away without our discovering the theft."

"But it is not here. You shall come back with us. We shall find you some other way for to go to Paris."

"Do you get any word from the front?" demanded the lieutenant bluntly, as he faced the Frenchman.

"I have heard that the Germans drive very hard. They try to push through for to strike Paris."

"So I have heard," replied the lieutenant dryly. "I have heard reports too of defeats they have suffered, but the following day their troops are usually farther south and a little nearer Paris all the time."

"They shall never get into Paris!" said the sergeant, placing his hand over his heart as he spoke. "General Joffre ees one great general. He shall lead the Germans on. He shall bring them into some trap. You shall see. He shall catch him so!" As he spoke the sergeant sud-

denly clapped his hands as if he would express the suddenness with which the plans of the French commander would accomplish the defeat of his enemies.

“There is only one thing for us to do,” said the lieutenant positively, as he and Earl turned back to the house in which they had discovered the party of French soldiers. “At least there is only one thing for me.”

“What is that?” inquired Earl.

“It is to go back to the place where we left our automobile.”

“That must be fifteen or twenty miles from here,” said Earl blankly.

“Doubtless.”

“How are we to get back there?” demanded Earl. “We can go ahead just as easily as we can go back and all the time we are nearer Paris. There must be some train or automobile which we can take.”

As he spoke Earl looked questioningly at the young Frenchman, who quickly said, “The railway ees very much uncertain. Sometimes the cars come and sometimes they do not. A man told me yesterday that he was eighteen hours coming from Paris.”

“Can we get an automobile here?” inquired the lieutenant.

“I very much fear not.”

“Aren’t there any automobiles going through here?”

“Very many. Many people have come from Paris to sail from Havre. Sometimes the road seems to be full.”

“If the automobiles come, they have to go back, don’t they?” said the Englishman soberly. “They cannot be full both ways. We ought to get a chance to go on to Paris. There goes one now,” he added abruptly as he pointed to a gray car that could be seen approaching from the side road.

From the piazza on which the three men were standing they were able to see the sentries that had been stationed on the road from which the car was swiftly approaching.

Suddenly the two sentries advanced and their actions could be seen by Earl and his companions as they challenged the car.

To the surprise of the men on the piazza the car did not stop. Indeed, its speed was increased as it approached the little village.

Within the car were five men and as they came nearer it was manifest that they were wearing British uniforms.

Startled by the sight and aware that the sentries that had been passed by the swiftly driven car

had now opened fire, the lieutenant drew his revolver and, advancing into the road, called upon the men in the car to stop.

To Earl the scene was most puzzling as well as exciting. If the inmates of the car were all British soldiers why should they be stopped by the French sentries or fired upon by an English naval lieutenant? The natural thought would be that all would gladly hail the coming of the five men from the Allies.

The excitement in the little village was now intense. People were peering from doors and windows as the great car, moving now much more swiftly, turned the corner not far from the place where Earl was standing.

It was plain, however, that the villagers were not without experience in matters of this kind. In the lower part of the street an old peasant was approaching with a cart drawn by one ox. It was also evident that he was aware of the excitement in the street although his actions did not change.

His directions to his slowly moving ox could not be heard, but his cart was so turned that it was standing directly across the roadway. Nor was there room on either side for the rapidly approaching automobile to pass.

The speed of the motor car was not decreased,

however, and a moment later there were shouts and cries when it ran into the ox-cart and instantly was overturned.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE GRAY CAR

THE excitement which arose when the accident was seen by the village people was great. That strange way in which a crowd assembles, no matter in what part of the world, when an unusual event takes place, found no exception in this little French hamlet. From unknown places and from every direction people ran to the street where the car had been overturned.

In the midst of the assembly, however, the band of French soldiers quickly took their places. At their word the villagers fell back, but not so far as to prevent them from seeing what was taking place.

The five men who had been in the overturned car were all dressed in the uniform of the British soldiers. It was quickly evident, however, that every one of the five was a German and the anger of the spectators was so great over the discovery, that the well-nigh reckless bravery of the men who had ventured so far into the enemy's country was ignored.

It was impossible for the five men to escape, and two of them were in such a condition that any

effort to flee would have been impossible. The arm of one man had been pinned beneath the car and from his lamentations it was evident that it was paining its owner intensely. Still another was lying by the roadside, motionless and insensible.

Earl Platt, like most American boys, was interested in any special excitement and speedily he had joined the throng which had hastened to the place. Pushing his way well within the circle he looked not merely at the men who now were prisoners, but also with deep interest he gazed at the car. He could see that it was armored and equipped with three quick-firing guns, one gun being on each side of the car and one in the rear.

"It is plain," thought Earl, "that these men are recklessly brave. They did not plan to attack any one, and their guns are all fixed simply for firing upon those who might try to follow them."

His attention, however, was speedily diverted to the disposition which was to be made of the five prisoners. The unconscious German was placed upon a stretcher and was followed by his four companions in close formation. The little band speedily was led away by the soldiers.

Previously, however, the prisoners had been searched. Their weapons had been taken from them and even the tires of their automobile had been cut open and inspected. No spot was safe

from being the hiding place of important messages. The Frenchmen already had learned that the thoroughness with which the Germans did all their work had been applied to their spy system, as well as to the details of their military organization.

On their way back to the place where the French sergeant had met them, Earl and the lieutenant were compelled to face the problem which now confronted them.

There was no boat to be had in which to follow the launch. In their minds there was slight doubt that other members of the German band had been in the vicinity, and that as soon as the boat had been made fast to the little dock, they had been aware of what was done and had daringly made off with the swift little craft. How they could have done this without being discovered was something which neither Earl nor the lieutenant was able to understand.

The place was so small that even the irregular trains did not stop there. It was therefore impossible for them to proceed by rail. Their boat was gone and their automobile was several miles from the place in which they now found themselves.

“What are we going to do?” inquired Earl anxiously. “Don’t you think we had better walk?”

"How long, lad, do you think it will take for you to walk about seventy miles?"

"A good deal longer than I want. If we are as far as that from Paris we must find some other way," said Earl positively.

"There are plenty of men who can tell what ought to be done, but I have noticed very few who are able to explain how to do it."

In spite of the excitement, Earl laughed at the seriousness of his companion. Not once had he seen a smile on the face of the lieutenant since first he had met him on the deck of the torpedo-boat destroyer.

"What can we do to get out of this place?" said Earl at last, almost in despair.

"We must find some way, I fancy," said the young Englishman, apparently unmoved by the difficulty of the position in which he and his companion now found themselves. "Ah," he added, "here comes the sergeant. Maybe he will have a suggestion for us."

It was plain when the young French soldier approached that he was thinking more of the exciting experiences through which he and his companions recently had passed than he was of the presence of the two young men before him.

Recognizing them, however, he stopped and quietly said, "Those Germans certainly are brave. Life does not seem to count for anything with

them. It is like a leaf blown by the wind. They do not stop, they do not consider."

"What will be done with these men?" inquired Earl quickly.

The young Frenchman shrugged his shoulders, but made no other reply. It was not difficult, therefore, for Earl to understand what fate would befall five soldiers of the enemy, who had dared to venture into a country as far as had these men and to wear the uniform of British soldiers.

"We do not know what to do," said the lieutenant. "Our boat is gone. There is no train and our automobile is at least twelve or fifteen miles back in the country. I wonder if we can secure another here."

The young Frenchman laughed and shook his head as he said, "All have been taken by the government. There are no horses, no automobiles and almost no young men."

"But what shall we do?" persisted the lieutenant.

"If you can say where you left your car it might be that I might telephone some one to help find it."

"I know just where I left it," said the Englishman promptly.

"You shall tell me then, and I will telephone."

Leaving Earl on the piazza of the rambling, old building the two entered a room in which the

sergeant explained that a telephone was to be found. It was ten minutes or more before the two men returned to the piazza. In response to the eager question of Earl the lieutenant said, "I fancy we shall have our car here within an hour or so. We have succeeded in locating it and the puncture already has been repaired."

When at last the little gray car was seen approaching, Earl and his companion were becoming impatient. The daylight meant much to both of them, for the sun already was low in the western sky. A long ride was before them and the perils naturally would be greatly increased as they drew near Paris.

It was therefore with great eagerness that they both expressed their gratitude to the young Frenchman who had assisted them. Good-bys speedily were spoken and the car resumed its journey.

It was with a feeling of relief, when an hour had elapsed, that Earl became aware that no exciting experiences had been undergone since they had resumed their journey.

At frequent intervals they had been stopped by soldiers or officers, but in every instance a brief explanation from the lieutenant brought forth not only an expression of willingness for the two young men to proceed, but Earl was convinced that in several instances there was a suppressed excite-

ment in the manner of the men who had granted the permit. As he had been unable to hear the words of his companion he was in ignorance of the cause of the success which thus far had uniformly greeted the request of Lieutenant Garnold that he and his companion should not be delayed on their journey. Apparently either the man himself, or the purpose of his journey, was of great importance.

“Where is it that you wish to stop?” inquired the officer at last as he turned and glanced at Earl, who was seated beside him.

“Faubourg St. Germain.”

“That is where Napoleon had one of his residences,” suggested the lieutenant.

“Is that so? I didn’t know that.”

“Indeed, he did. Do you know, I fancy the German staff have made a very careful study of Napoleon’s campaigns and are planning the present war somewhat upon the lines he followed.”

“What makes you think that?”

The Englishman shrugged his shoulders, but perhaps feeling that his companion would not fully understand if he did explain, he lapsed once more into silence.

Earl, however, was too keenly interested in the sights which greeted him to enable him to repress the questions that rose in his mind.

"Do you know why you are at war?" he abruptly demanded.

"Do I know what, sir?" inquired the officer in astonishment.

"Do you know why you are at war? Do you think one man in ten knows what he is fighting for?"

"Most assuredly I know what I am doing," said the officer solemnly. "Do you fancy I would be here if I were ignorant of what it all means?"

"How many Germans do you think know what they are fighting for?"

"Ah, that is different," said the Englishman. "They are unduly ambitious. They openly declare they are seeking a place in the sun. And did you ever hear of such egotism as their declaration that they wish Germany to be over all?"

"It does sound that way a little," laughed Earl, who seemed to take delight in quietly prodding his companion.

"Indeed it does. Such over-weening egotism I have never seen."

"Well, how about your hymns, 'Rule Britannia,' and 'Brittania Rules the Wave'? Don't the English sing something like that?"

The young lieutenant turned abruptly and for a moment stared at the face of his companion.

"It is quite plain," said he, "that you do not understand."

"I acknowledged that quite a little while ago," said Earl. "What puzzles me is why it is egotism for the Germans to want to place Germany over all and not egotism for the English to claim that Britannia should rule all the oceans."

"But you do not understand," repeated the Englishman. "You see, Great Britain does rule the oceans. We have a fleet twice as large as that of any other nation."

"But," persisted Earl, "suppose another nation wants to make a fleet as large as yours?"

"They cannot do it."

"Why not?"

"We shall not permit it."

Earl laughed and said no more. The sterling worth of his companion he fully appreciated, but the possibility of his looking at any of the warring nations from without, and least of all upon England in that manner, was not promising.

However, conversation ceased, for the little car now was not far distant from the suburb in which Earl's uncle had his home. The thought was stimulating, for here he might soon receive word concerning his missing brother.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE WAY TO PARIS

THE houses, as the swift little motor car swept over the road, seemed to Earl to be strangely deserted. Indeed, there were no signs of excitement to be found on any street. The lieutenant, who was driving the car, apparently had alike forgotten his recent conversation and his expressions of hatred for the enemies of his country.

Abruptly, however, he glanced at his companion and, as if no time had intervened since his last statement, said, "Have you ever been in Berlin?"

"No."

"Then you have never seen the Germans get on and off a tramcar."

"Why, do they do that any differently from others?" inquired Earl, laughing lightly as he spoke.

"I fancy not, but they have a different treatment for their women. I have seen a German soldier push old or helpless women aside while he crowded ahead to enter the car. Indeed, I nearly had a personal encounter one time. I had

watched an old lady with a basket, who three or four times had been pushed back by the men and at last I stood upon the lower step of the tram and seized the rail, thus preventing any one from pushing past me. I permitted the old lady to enter, although the looks cast at me, if they had been alive, might have abruptly put an end to my life. How long do you expect to stop here?" abruptly inquired the young officer.

"I expect to stop for some time. I am not going on to Paris with you."

"It may be possible that you will want to go," said the officer quietly.

Conversation ceased and Earl was an interested observer of the scenes through which they were passing. The quietness which rested over the entire scene was eloquent of the burden which the nation was bearing. Occasionally, a child accompanied by a woman would be seen walking along the country road. No young men, however, appeared to be left in the region.

A half-hour later Lieutenant Garnold turned in his abrupt manner and said to Earl, "I think I shall stop with you at St. Germain."

"I am sure my uncle would be delighted to have you do so," responded Earl cordially. "You have been most kind to me and I am sure he would be glad to tell you what my father would say if he were here."

“Quite so. But I am not planning to remain over night. All I wish to do is to stop with you and help you find your relatives. It may be then that you will wish to continue with me on my way to Paris.”

Several times the car had been stopped by sentinels or guards of various kinds. In approaching the suburb of Faubourg St. Germain more numerous guards were met. This fact, among others, was one of the evidences that Paris was taking unusual precautions to protect her safety.

When at last Earl and his companion arrived at the place they were seeking they at once began to make inquiries as to where the residence of his uncle might be found.

After several stops the desired information was obtained and in a brief time the car drew up in front of the place which Earl had been informed was his uncle's home.

What a strange appearance, however, did the place present! Upon the lawn and in the yard were many cattle and sheep. Some of the animals were lying upon the ground while others still were grazing. An old man, plainly a peasant, was watching over the herds and stared stupidly at Earl and the lieutenant when they approached.

In response to Earl's inquiry as to whose the place was, the man shook his head, staring at the visitors and making no other reply.

“I fancy he does not understand your French,” whispered the lieutenant loudly.

Acting at once upon his own suggestion the young officer made an effort to enter into conversation, but his attempt met with no better success than his younger companion’s. Earl was too deeply concerned to realize the opportunity thus afforded him to equalize his position with Lieutenant Garnold, who, in spite of his kindness, had been somewhat condescending in his manner throughout the long ride.

At last Earl resolutely approached the front door and noisily made his presence known by means of the iron knocker.

No response, however, was given to his summons. Indeed, to the troubled boy, standing as he did on the piazza, in the dusk there seemed to be an echo from within the house. A feeling of uncertainty as well as of uneasiness crept over him. Glancing behind him he saw that the sun had just disappeared below the western sky. The cattle and the sheep on the lawn seemed to be almost weird in the dim light.

Again Earl turned to the door and his renewed summons was loud and long. Still there was no response. The peasant apparently had ignored his presence. “It is strange,” thought Earl as he looked behind him, “that cattle and sheep should be pastured on the lawn of this beautiful

place." Between the house and the piazza there were several acres of lawn which had been carefully tended. The only conclusion now in Earl's mind was that his uncle must be absent from home.

However, once more the boy announced his presence, but failure greeted his efforts as before. The door was not opened and the house seemingly was deserted.

Still unwilling to abandon his attempt, Earl withdrew from the front of the house and slowly walked toward the rear. Even there he was impressed by the beauties of the place. There were numerous evidences of unusual care and the little château was most artistic in its outlines. The grounds also were beautiful.

In the rear of the house Earl met with no better success than he had obtained at the front.

Manifestly the place was deserted. Not even a caretaker had been left.

Somewhat startled, Earl turned abruptly when he heard the voice of Lieutenant Garnold, who had quietly followed him.

"I am confident there is no one here. I have had some further conversation with the shepherd and I cannot learn from him that any one remains on the place."

"Quite so," said Earl, laughing in spite of his anxiety.

"The only thing that remains is for you to go with me to Paris."

"I must make some further inquiries," protested Earl, "before I give up my search. My uncle may be gone only for a day."

"We must not remain long," said the lieutenant uneasily. "It will not be wise for us to attempt to enter Paris after dark. In fact I fancy the gates of the city may be closed at sunset."

"There isn't any danger of the German army coming this way is there?"

"It remains to be seen," said the lieutenant, "whether the German army is able to come at all."

"It seems to have been able to come a considerable distance," said Earl. "However, I will make some inquiries about my uncle. If you will take me to the village post office I probably can find out there what I want to know."

"A most excellent suggestion," said the lieutenant cordially.

Both travelers at once returned to the car and after a few inquiries had been made they proceeded to the post office.

Here, after some delay, they were informed by a woman that Earl's uncle and aunt had left Faubourg St. Germain the preceding day and had fled with others of the village people to Paris for refuge. There was no probability of their im-

mediate return. The woman's manner was stolid and she spoke of the war and the flight of the people almost with indifference.

"I am going with you to Paris," said Earl to his companion.

"And you are quite right in so doing."

"I can search for my uncle there as well as here. I hope I shall have better luck in Paris than I have had in this place. I do not know where to go nor how to begin."

"That will soon be arranged," said the lieutenant cordially. "If your uncle is in Paris I think you will have slight difficulty in locating him. I understand that many of the Parisians have already departed from the city. I am accustomed to go to the Hotel Regina," added the lieutenant.

"That will suit me as well as any other place," responded Earl.

There were many difficulties and delays, but the young lieutenant and his companion were at last within the gates of the great city. There they frequently were stopped, but the mysterious word that Lieutenant Garnold possessed, every time was sufficient to secure for them permission to proceed.

Even within the city the silence which Earl had noted in the little villages was pronounced. Not many people were seen on the streets or boulevards.

Somehow the young American did not feel any great alarm. It was all novel to him and his interest was keen.

Early the following morning he made his way to the office of the American ambassador. He was received with the utmost kindness, but was soon informed that nothing was known of the place where his uncle might be found.

Nor had any word been received from Leon. Neither he nor his uncle had registered with the ambassador nor had either sent any report to the office as to where he might be found.

What was he to do? Where was he to go? The questions were on Earl's lips, but the only word of advice he received from the ambassador was to go back home and not even to stop in England longer than he might find absolutely necessary.

Not yet, however, was Earl ready to abandon his search. The word of his father had been imperative for him to find his brother, and that fact, as well as his anxiety to learn what had befallen Leon, caused him to decide to continue his efforts.

That night, thoroughly tired from his journey, Earl was sleeping soundly until he was suddenly aroused by the noise of a terrific explosion. At first he was unable to locate the outburst which almost seemed to be within the hotel. At once he leaped from his bed and saw that Lieutenant Gar-

nold was in the door-way between their connecting rooms.

“What is it? What is it?” inquired Earl.

“It is an explosion.”

“But what explosion?”

“That I cannot say, though I have my suspicions.” As he spoke the lieutenant approached the windows in which the glass had been completely shattered.

Cries of alarm could be heard from the street below. People were running along the corridors of the hotel, and immediately Earl and the lieutenant decided to dress and join the throng outside.

In a few minutes they were running from the hotel toward a crowd which already had assembled on the street nearby.

In the dim light the sight which greeted Earl was one which he was unable to banish from his mind. A sudden feeling of terror possessed him and he turned abruptly to the lieutenant who was standing by his side, apparently unmoved by the prevailing excitement.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE BOMB

“**W**HAT is it? What is it?” Earl inquired in a low whisper,

The dim light of the early morning was at hand. Already people were moving upon the streets of Paris, and promptly a crowd had assembled when the terrific explosion had been heard. Even in time of war the boys seemed to spring from unknown places and came running swiftly in the direction of the spot where some special excitement was promised.

In front of the place where Earl and the lieutenant were standing the street was torn for twelve or fifteen yards. A hole in the ground to a depth of six feet or more was directly before them. From this hole the bodies of two men, both plainly lifeless, were being lifted. Nearby, on the sidewalk, several others were to be seen who had been seriously injured, although apparently life was not extinct.

On the faces of the assembly Earl saw terror plainly visible. Some of the people were angry as well as terrified. But there was little confusion and none of the childish excitement which

Earl had been led to expect from the French people.

“What is it? What is it?” repeated Earl, still more excited, as he saw the bodies of the unfortunate victims carried around the corner of the street.

“It is a bomb, I fancy,” said the young Englishman, dryly.

“Where did it come from?”

“The sky, most likely.”

“What do you mean?”

“Indeed, it is a bomb,” said an American, drawn by the sound of his own language, who now approached the two. “I am told that an aeroplane flew over this city this morning and this is the fifth bomb that has been dropped.”

“Did the others do any damage?” inquired the lieutenant calmly.

“I do not know. It is too early yet to tell, but from what I heard I do not think they did much damage. This seems to be the worst of all,” he added as he glanced again at the ruin wrought in the street.

“What right have they,” demanded Earl impatiently, “to drop bombs on a city that is not besieged?”

“According to the understanding of The Hague Treaty they have no right. Every city that is to be besieged is to receive warning, and the women

and children are to be permitted to flee before shells are thrown."

"Well, then, why is it done here?"

"When you find out the reasons for the way in which the Belgians have been treated perhaps you may understand this also," said the lieutenant bitterly. "The Germans have burned the city of Louvain in Belgium and destroyed even the library of the University."

"What have they done that for?"

"They claim that the civilians attacked the German soldiers after the occupying force had entered the city."

"Did they?"

"I cannot say. Quite likely some snipers may have been busy. It is also said that many of the occupying force were drunk, having made too free use of the wine-cellars. At all events the place is absolutely ruined, I am told, and against all the accepted regulations of civilized warfare."

"That is not all," joined in the stranger. "A German airship a week ago flew over Antwerp in the early morning and dropped bombs right into the heart of the city."

"Did it do great damage?" inquired Earl in a low voice.

"I understand," said the stranger, "that ten non-combatants were killed and that several houses were wrecked."

“Had Antwerp been notified that it was to be besieged?”

“Not at the time.”

“Why, then, was the Zeppelin sent to Antwerp?”

“Probably to alarm the people more than anything else.”

“It would be a pity,” said the lieutenant sharply, “if the cathedral at Antwerp should be destroyed as Louvain was. It is a wonderful building. And that picture of Turner’s, ‘The Descent from the Cross,’ which hangs in the cathedral there is one of the most wonderful I have ever seen.”

“But I have read,” said Earl quickly, “that the Germans are talking much about their ‘culture.’ Why do they destroy works of art and libraries and Universities?”

“I fancy you will have to inquire of them,” said the lieutenant bitterly.

“Are more bombs likely to be dropped here in Paris?”

“They are likely to be dropped in Paris, though whether they are likely to be dropped near here or not, I cannot say.”

“Then the people will be driven to the cellars.”

“I think not. The French people are taking this whole matter with great quietness. If any one did not see them he would scarcely be able to

believe they are the same Parisians whom you might have seen here three months ago. I fancy we might as well go back into the hotel. It is now almost time for breakfast and personally I am quite ready for it."

A few minutes later the lieutenant and Earl, together with the stranger who explained that he was an American named Shaw, were seated at a table in the dining room. Most of the waiters already had gone to the front. Such service as could be rendered was given by girls. Nor was there the usual French menu from which to select.

However, the plain breakfast which was served was well-cooked and soon the hunger of the little party was satisfied.

Once more advancing to the street they saw a crowd assembled before the hotel, most of whom now were looking into the sky instead of at the ruin wrought at their feet.

"They are looking for the 'tauben,'" suggested the American gentleman.

"What are they?" said the lieutenant.

"War birds. Probably they will get used to them before long and they won't be so much of a curiosity."

"Do you think that the Germans will get into Paris?"

"I cannot say," replied the lieutenant, shaking

his head. "They are not far from here now. Perhaps if the Russians make trouble in East Prussia and Poland the Germans may have to withdraw a part of their army and change their plans."

"But the general offensive movement of the Allies has failed, I am told."

"They are withdrawing. We must wait, I fancy, before we know further the meaning of it all. It may be that the French and English are being driven back."

"At all events," said Earl, "the Germans have taken the forts on the border."

"Some of them," acknowledged the lieutenant. "It was thought that Namur would be able to hold out longer, but the German siege guns have been too strong."

"I understand that it takes thirty-three teams of horses to haul one of those guns."

"Quite likely."

"Do you think that Japan will make trouble for Germany? The time limit she gave to Germany has been up several days and she probably has declared war."

"Indeed she has already declared war," said the lieutenant, "and her fleet has blockaded the German port of Kiao Chau. Meanwhile, I have hopes that our fleet may be able to do a little more."

"It already has done something," said Earl enthusiastically. "Didn't a fleet of British cruisers and torpedo-boat destroyers fight a part of the German fleet in the North Sea just this week?"

"So the papers reported," replied the lieutenant dryly. "I fancy the reports are more or less true. To the northwest of Heligoland they had this fight to which you refer and sank three German cruisers and two of their destroyers."

"I noticed," said Earl, "when we were coming into the city, even if it was dark, that a great many houses in the suburbs had been destroyed. Why was that?"

"In order that they might not interfere with the range of the circle of forts."

"How many men do you suppose," inquired Earl, "are actively engaged in the battle now?"

"It is commonly reported," said the lieutenant, "that about six million are really fighting."

"Whew!" whistled Earl. "And where are they?"

"About three million are supposed to be in France and Belgium and about three million more are near the Russian frontier."

"Which army has more men?"

"The Germans outnumber the Allies at present, while it is said that over on the other border the Russians considerably outnumber the Germans and the Austro-Hungarians."

“Do you think it is true that the Germans have won a victory over the Russian army at Allenstein in Prussia?” inquired Earl anxiously.

“There can be slight doubt of it. Indeed, the Russians themselves acknowledge that they were driven back. I fancy, however, that the Germans have reported a larger number of prisoners taken than they could show.”

“How many did they claim?”

“Seventy thousand.”

“In one battle?”

“Yes. On the other hand the Russian army in Austria under General Rusky has very decisively defeated the Austrian army.”

“Just now,” said Earl, “I am more interested in seeing if the German line approaching Paris can be halted.”

“They are making a terrific drive. They cannot be more than thirty-five or forty miles away by this time.”

“What shall we do if they enter Paris?” inquired Earl anxiously.

“I fancy,” said the lieutenant, “they will not march directly into the city. Paris has wonderful lines of forts for miles around. They will have to be taken before the German army is inside the walls of Paris.”

“I hope they won’t come in to-day,” said Earl quickly, as he turned away. “I am going again

to the American ambassador to see if he has any further word for me this morning," he explained.

The deep excitement in the street increased, although the people were still quiet in their manner, even when it became known that the seat of the French government that day was to be transferred from Paris to Bordeaux.

In spite of the explanation that was given that the measure was simply one to meet remote possibilities and that the government did not really fear that Paris was about to fall, the removal did not increase the hope of the troubled people. Anxious they were, but resolute. Most of the foreigners had already departed from the city, together with many of the inhabitants who would increase the demands for food and protection if Paris should be besieged.

The streets were quiet and not many people were to be seen. Although he had not been in Paris before, Earl Platt was aware of the change when he left his companion to resume his search for his lost brother.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE BIG ARMIES

**I**N order to understand more clearly the condition in which Earl Platt found Paris at the time of his entrance into the city, it is necessary for us to outline briefly some of the movements of the great armies which were battling at this time. And the armies were great. Greater than any the world has ever seen. The numbers engaged in the world famous battle of Waterloo, where Napoleon's overthrow occurred, seem like play compared with the vast numbers that were engaged in the big war.

It is necessary also, in order to understand the conditions, for us to follow the Germans' attack upon France. The only ally Germany had at this time was Austria. Against her were ranged France, Russia, Great Britain and Servia. In the Far East, Japan also was threatening to destroy German power in the China Sea.

In such a condition, the German army, after the armies of her enemies had been assembled, would be outnumbered. Her first plan, therefore, was to strike France before her other enemies could mobilize their troops.

France was almost, if not quite as quick as Germany in assembling her great army. Russia, however, although in territory it is nearly two and one-half times as large as the United States, has in many parts of her country poor railway communications. Germany, therefore, believed that Russia would require a long time, at least several weeks, before she could gather her soldiers. Great Britain, too, had a small standing army and there would be a long delay before she could send a force of men which would be of much power on the field.

The Kaiser, therefore, believed that it was possible for him to strike quickly at France, while Russia was slowly gathering her troops and Great Britain was trying to raise an army. In England men are not compelled to serve as soldiers as they are in Germany, but are enrolled as volunteers. The German leaders believed that they would be able quickly to rid themselves of France as an enemy.

Once this victory had been gained, then the conquering German troops would be sent against Russia to repeat the victories.

Along the Franco-German frontier there was a line of strong forts. Soon after their defeat in 1870 the French had erected great fortifications at Verdun, Toul, Epinal and at Belfort. Behind these was a second line of forts almost as strong.

Probably, Germany believed, with her big siege guns that she could destroy these fortifications. She was, however, aware that with the field army of France manning these places, the task would not be an easy one. Nor could the victory be won speedily. For this reason Germany turned to Belgium.

From Aix-la-Chapelle, in Germany, to Liége in Belgium, there was a great railway. All around Liége there were also several railways across the level country to Brussels. From Brussels there were other lines that would enable a victorious army to move rapidly across the level lowlands.

It is true Germany was a party to a treaty whereby the neutrality of Belgium was to be respected. But boldly declaring that treaties were only scraps of paper, and with equal boldness asserting that necessity knew no law, the Germans began an attack on Liége, August 4, 1914. For twelve days the little Belgian army successfully fought off the Germany cavalry, which had been sent, not so much to attack the fort, as to screen the army which was gathering behind them.

Two weeks later the great German host, probably one million strong, advanced. Their huge siege guns, of which they had boasted so much, proved that the boasting had not been vain. Apparently without much effort the fortifications were destroyed.

The little Belgian army then was driven back toward Antwerp, while on the twentieth of August, Brussels was entered by the confident German soldiers. Soon afterward the army wheeled and with all its tremendous power began its drive toward Paris.

There was a long line of soldiers also extending even to the Swiss frontier. Two immense armies now were facing each other. However, the right wing of the Germans moved forward hoping to get in behind the left wing of the army of the Allies, who then were outnumbered by the invaders. Indeed, at this time the army of General von Kluck was really nearer Paris than was either of the two great French armies on the frontier. Germany knew that what she did must be done with haste.

Quickly she acted. Near Chaleroi and near Givet the Allies were forced back after desperate fighting.

The great fort, Namur, between Liége and Chaleroi, had fallen after a brief attack. The French evidently had believed that this fort was so strong that it would hold back any advancing army a long time.

Soon afterward, on August twenty-sixth, the British forces among the Allies, that had been fighting desperately about Mons, were compelled to defend themselves at Cambrai against what

seemed to be an overwhelming attack of their enemies. Two corps bravely and almost despairingly contended against five.

There was great danger that the little British force would be surrounded, for the Germans were attacking them at the same time upon the front and striving to surround them. Perhaps there was no more critical moment in the entire campaign. If the British had been captured or their forces had been destroyed, the Germans then would have gained an entrance between Paris and the French armies in the east. It would then be very easy to destroy these armies simply by overwhelming them.

Perhaps the world has never seen a more desperate and daring fight than was presented by the little British army. Finally, after suffering heavy losses and after it had inflicted losses still greater upon the enemy, it succeeded in withdrawing. Soon afterward, French soldiers stationed at its left prevented an attack on the flank and enabled it to make a fresh stand.

How narrowly the army of the Allies, in spite of its desperate fighting and successful withdrawal, escaped destruction, perhaps will never be fully known.

When the first day of September came it was plain that the German attempt by their left flank was not to succeed. It is true that the French

army had steadily withdrawn until it had arrived almost under the guns of Paris. But it was no longer possible for the Germans to cut off the left wing. There was still a chance that the huge force of invaders might possibly break through the line between Paris and the forts on the east.

General von Kluck with his army, turning as a gate turns on its hinges, swung northward, followed by the eager Allies. If the Germans could break through the center they then thought that they had another chance to destroy two different divisions of their enemies.

The left wing of the Allies, however, as has been said, was now too near to Paris to enable the Germans to close in behind it. While General von Kluck had been advancing, four other German armies had also been approaching steadily, compelling the Allies to give away before them. At the time it was believed the French troops were retreating, but now it is understood that they were simply withdrawing so that their line might be kept intact.

At Vitry, or rather between Vitry and Sezanne, a great attack was made. Here, however, the French were much at home, because for a long time their artillery had been tested and artillery practice had here been held.

General von Kluck marching with all his forces swept across the front of the Allies that were be-

fore Paris, then marched south across the river Marne. Perhaps he was hoping to be able to move so rapidly that he might strike the French center while his companion general, Von Bülow, was advancing along the line which his army was following from Brussels. If so, his plan failed.

At Paris the French had an army numbering nearly a half million men. On one side and from his rear Von Bülow was attacked by its garrison, while the British and the French soldiers were in front of him. When these two armies began to move, their action, some one has said, was like a pair of scissors upon a sheet of paper. If Von Bülow had not been a very brilliant and able general he never would have been able to escape the trap that was set for him. It was not long, however, before the entire German army was slowly moving backward, while the Allies eagerly were following them.

In general the plan of the French army had been a fighting retreat until they had arrived at the place where they would be protected by the forts and garrisons about Paris.

Three weeks' delay, however, had now occurred, and during that period the Russians had been moving much more rapidly than their enemies had believed them capable of doing and were threatening to give battle along the border between Germany and Russia.

The French as well as the Germans had lost heavily and in addition many of the beautiful French cities and provinces had been destroyed by sword and fire.

It was necessary now for the Germans to withdraw some of their powerful army that was fighting the French and British troops to meet the flood that was threatening to pour in from Russia. Indeed, it was already reported that Russian soldiers had won several victories in East Prussia and that great hordes were pushing forward toward the Vistula River.

Before the engagement at Cambrai had been fought the Germans had been compelled to send two of their army corps to the help of the men that were attacking the Russians. But Russia was advancing in three lines,—one toward East Prussia, one in Poland and the third in Galicia, a province of Austria, which country, as we know, was fighting side by side with Germany.

In Galicia, the Austrian army was suffering terribly. It was reported that the five corps, which made up half the Austrain army in that province, had been almost destroyed. If the Austrian army did not receive help soon, there was danger that it might be entirely cut to pieces and thereby Germany lose the aid of her ally.

So the Germans not only sent back the two Austrian corps which had been helping them in their

advance upon France, but in addition they sent also five Germans corps.

The condition was made even worse because there were reports that the little Servian army had badly defeated four more Austrian corps at the Jedar River.

After Germany had sent all these men to East Prussia and Galicia, she no longer outnumbered the soldiers in the army of the Allies. Great numbers were withdrawn from each army in Alsace to assist the soldiers that were fighting desperately in the west and in the center.

But the fear of an attack upon Paris, at least for a time, was gone. Although the city had been deserted by many of the people who had made their homes there, the enthusiasm among those who remained was great when it became definitely known that the German army had abandoned its plan to attack or besiege the city and had been driven northward. It was at such a time as this when Earl Platt began his search for his lost brother.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE OLD WOMAN'S BASKET

ALTHOUGH it was early in the morning, Lieutenant Garnold departed from the hotel before Earl had left on his search for his brother.

“I am expecting to return in time for luncheon,” the lieutenant had explained. “If you are here at that time I may then be able to explain to you what is yet to be done.”

“About one o'clock?” inquired Earl.

“I fancy that hour will do. It may be that I shall be somewhat late, but unless my plans are disarranged you may expect me near that time. If I am not here by one-thirty, then you may know that I have been detained and it will not be necessary for you to wait for me any longer.”

When Earl walked along the streets, which seemed to be somewhat deserted, he met several small assemblies of people still gazing up into the sky as if they were searching for the German “war birds.”

There was more or less an air of nervousness manifested by every one. At any moment a shell

might be dropped from the sky and the damage which it might inflict was not confined to the buildings alone. Already it was reported that one spire of the Notre Dame Cathedral had been struck, although slight damage had been inflicted.

Earl did not delay to mingle with these crowds and in a brief time arrived at the office of the American ambassador.

Some of the representatives of other countries had followed the officials of France when they had removed the seat of government from Paris to Bordeaux. The American ambassador, however, had remained at his post and had been of great assistance, not only to his own countrymen who were in trouble, but also in looking after matters which concerned the English, German and Austrian governments as well.

Earl was not surprised when he found that the office was not yet open. Glancing at his watch he saw that he had arrived a half-hour or more before the time when it would be possible for him to present once more his plea for help or to learn whether any information had been secured for him.

Turning once more to the boulevard he walked slowly to his left, still interested in the people, some of whom were scurrying about the streets as if they were in terror of a sudden appearance of an airship. From the Eiffel Tower the pre-

ceding evening, lights had been searching the sky and even now Earl could see a French aeroplane high in the air and slowly moving over the city.

All these things doubtless were causes of great uneasiness among the people that still remained in Paris. The effect upon them, however, instead of causing them to be demonstrative had made them quiet in their bearing. Their anxiety was manifest in the expressions of their faces.

Earl had walked ten or fifteen minutes and found himself in a part of the city in which he had not been before. Indeed, as this was his first visit, as yet he had seen very little of the wonderful city of Paris.

On the street before him he saw an old woman staggering under a heavy basket which she was carrying.

When he overtook her he was surprised to find one so old attempting to carry such a load. Her face was wrinkled and her manner betrayed her exhaustion.

Earl's knowledge of French, as we know, was very limited, but there was no misunderstanding his meaning when he stepped in front of the woman and offered to carry her basket. With many expressions of her gratitude the old woman relinquished her load and Earl, walking by her side, carried the basket which apparently was laden with provisions.

He did not know in which direction to go nor the place which his companion was seeking. Glancing at his watch he saw that it was already time for him to return to the ambassador's office. The pitiful sight, however, of the old woman's weakness and her evident desire to hasten caused him to abandon his plan for a time, concluding that with such a load she could not have far to go.

Earl laughed good-naturedly when several times the woman spoke rapidly to him, gesticulating with her hands and pointing to a house not far in advance.

Assuming that this was the place to which she desired to go, Earl continued with his task and was not surprised when they arrived in front of the house she had indicated to have her grasp him by his arm.

Placing the basket upon the sidewalk Earl once more was reminded of its heaviness. The few provisions which he could see plainly on top did not give it this weight. "Very likely," he thought, "there are other articles besides cabbages in the basket."

Lifting his hat to indicate that he was about to return, Earl watched the old woman as she laboriously opened the iron gate, which admitted her to the little yard. Not more than six feet from the sidewalk was a door which opened into the basement of the house.

As the woman swung back the gate she stumbled and almost fell. The young American, as he saw her accident, hastened to her side and said smilingly, "You had better let me carry the basket into the house for you."

A torrent of words fell from the woman's lips, but Earl was not able to understand what she was saying. From her manner, however, he concluded that she was willing to accept his aid, and he at once lifted the basket and followed her as she led the way to the door before him.

Fumbling in her pocket for a key she at last opened the door, although Earl was surprised by the manner in which she rapped with the key before she placed it in the lock. Several times she had struck the panel of the door looking keenly at the key as she did so, as if she was trying to rid it of the dust which had accumulated.

In a brief time, however, the door swung back and turning to Earl she bade him follow her into the house.

This was more than the boy had planned to do. He had been willing to help, but he had had no thought of entering the building. However, the woman seemed to be so feeble that he quickly followed her, carrying the basket as he advanced.

As he entered the room the woman stood behind him and closed the door with such force that Earl once more was surprised and turned to look at

his guide. The noise made by the closing door could be plainly heard throughout the building.

Motioning to Earl to place the basket on the floor, his conductor at once departed from the room, speaking volubly as she did so. Still Earl was unable to understand what she said, but from her motions he concluded that she would return in a moment and permit him to depart from the place.

Several minutes elapsed and Earl seated himself, striving to possess his soul in patience. Still the old woman did not come back. The moments passed slowly and still he heard no word. What was the meaning of it all? Why did she not return?

Once Earl heard a sound as of footsteps somewhere in the house above. He started from his seat, thinking that perhaps his time of release was at hand, but the sound was not repeated. A tense silence rested over all.

There was nothing, however, for Earl to do, for a time at least, except to await the return of the strange woman to whose aid he had gone. As the moments passed, the silence in the house became oppressive. If such a thing were possible Earl almost believed that he could hear the stillness. The street outside also was silent. Not even the footfall of any passerby could be heard.

Earl's feeling of uneasiness increased. He was

not yet alarmed so much as he was impatient. The woman whom he had aided evidently had forgotten all about him.

Approaching the door by which he had entered, Earl noiselessly tried to open it. His patience was gone and he had decided that he would wait no longer.

The door, however, was peculiar. He examined the lock but was unable to discover how it worked. And yet the door was fast shut.

He noticed now for the first time how massive and strong the panels of the door were. He pulled steadily upon the knob, but no response was made to his efforts.

Again Earl returned to his seat, deciding that there was nothing else to be done except to await the return of the old woman.

Several minutes elapsed and still she did not come. Hastily rising he entered the hall and listened. Not a sound could be heard in the house above him.

The feeling of nervousness in the boy's heart was increased. The ruin caused by the bomb which had fallen in the street directly in front of the hotel at which he was stopping, again was seen, and fear of what the result would be if a similar bomb should fall on the house in which he was shut in, came upon him. Doubtless the house then would be ruined and beneath the crum-

bling walls he would be buried. No one ever would know of the fate which had befallen him.

It was not unnatural that Earl's thoughts should have wandered to his far-away home across the sea. With Leon's fate unknown, what would be the feeling of his parents if he too should be lost?

For a moment a feeling of anger swept over the heart of the excited boy. Paris, with its defenses and the great army that was threatening it; London, like a slumbering giant not yet fully aware of the perils that were likely to befall; the spies with their secrecy and their daring; the marching troops; the anxiety in the faces of the women now seemed to him something to be avoided. He heartily wished that he had never crossed the sea. When his thoughts wandered from the threatening dangers to the fields where the dead and wounded soldiers with unseeing eyes looked up into the sky, suddenly a great wave of fear swept over him.

Returning to the room from which he had come he once more frantically tried to open the door, but his efforts still were unavailing.

Turning to the windows he tried every one in turn, but escape in that way was also impossible.

And yet the boy aroused himself at the thought that somehow he must escape from the house. His own safety as well as that of his brother depended

upon his ability to obtain another interview in the near future with the American ambassador.

Almost in desperation, and feeling as if he were pursued by some real but unseen peril, Earl ran swiftly into the hallway and resolutely ascended the stairs.

## CHAPTER XIX

### SHUT IN

**A**T first Earl moved cautiously, striving to prevent his footfalls on the wooden stairway from being heard. Soon, however, he thought that if he really was in danger it would be increased by such action. The better plan, if his presence should be discovered, would be to appear as if he was not alarmed and as if some mistake had been made by which he was confined within the house.

In spite of his efforts to reassure himself, he stopped frequently and listened. No sound had been heard when he arrived on the first floor. Standing at the head of the stairway he was able to see the different rooms on that floor, all of which were connected and all opening into the hall. They were like and yet unlike those which he had known across the sea.

The rooms were well furnished, heavy rugs being on the floor. No person was to be seen, however, and when Earl in the hallway stopped and again listened intently, still no sound was heard. Apparently the house was unoccupied.

And yet the troubled boy was confident that the old woman, whom he had assisted, could not have departed from the house, at least from the front.

Still striving to appear at ease, and as if his presence in the house was natural, Earl called sharply.

“Good morning. Good morning,” he repeated. “Is there any one here?”

Aware that his words would not likely be understood he tried by the tones of his voice to indicate his desire to find some one who would not be alarmed at the discovery of his presence in the house.

His first calls were in a low tone, but when no response was received, in tones still louder he called again and again.

Although he was waiting and listening anxiously, still no reply was given to his summons.

Becoming more alarmed he called again in tones yet louder. But the silence that rested over the strange house was unbroken.

There was something so strange in his experiences that for a moment there was a thought in Earl’s mind that there must be something uncanny about the place. What could it all mean? Surely the old woman must be in the house, but she had disappeared when she had placed her basket on the floor in the kitchen and had neither been seen nor heard since.

Like many French houses the entrance was directly from the street. There was, however, a long window or narrow doorway directly in front of the place where Earl was standing. Deciding that he must make some attempt to escape from the place, the troubled boy at once approached the narrow door and discovered that it was locked inside and fastened with a chain, to which a small padlock was attached.

"I have heard of locks to keep people out, but these locks seem to be made to fasten people in," thought Earl as he moved quickly to the different windows in the room. Earl found that every one was locked from the inside, and like the door, was fastened with a chain. Apparently escape was impossible.

For a moment there flashed into the mind of Earl Platt the suspicion that he might be a prisoner. Had he been lured to the place by design? Calmly he tried to think over the various events which had led up to his present predicament, but he was unable to recall anything which would account for his trouble. He was positive that his meeting with the old woman was entirely accidental. He was equally sure that she had not spoken to him and that it was the sight of her feeble efforts to carry her heavy basket which had led him first to speak to her. But where could she be? Had she departed from the house, or

was she still within, and were his fears groundless?

Thus reminded of his conductor he again called in still louder tones, "Hello, is there anybody in the house? I am shut in."

After a brief interval he repeated his hail, but silence still rested over the place. A slight noise in the street at that moment was so startling that Earl turned sharply, prepared to flee down the stairway. The noise soon ceased, however, and the tense silence returned.

Instantly overcoming the impulse, Earl turned and made his way up the stairway to the floor above. Here, too, he found the doors into the rooms all open, but still it was impossible for him to discover any person on the floor. He repeated his call and looked keenly all about him. He was standing at the head of the stairway prepared to flee if sudden peril presented itself.

Not a sound was heard, however. The tense silence within the house was becoming almost unbearable. What could it all mean? Why was he there? Surely his coming had resulted from a good impulse. He had been sincere in his desire to help the old woman with her burden. Meanwhile there was no escape from the fact that not only had he been left alone in the house, but his departure was made almost impossible, as the doors and windows were all locked from within.

Still, undecided, Earl mounted the stairway leading to the third floor. He did not, however, go to the top, but standing on one of the steps he once more announced his presence and tried to make any one who might be in any of the adjoining rooms hear him.

The same result, however, which had followed his other attempts was quickly manifest. The conviction was becoming strong in Earl's mind that not only was he the sole person in the house at the time, but that he had been made a prisoner by design.

Quickly turning, Earl made his way back to the room in the basement. Several times he was unable to escape the conviction that his actions were watched, and once he started as if some one was in pursuit.

Although Earl Platt was unable fully to understand his feelings at the time he nevertheless thought that perhaps his unusual experiences in England had made him unduly suspicious. The part which, without any wish or word of his own he had been compelled to take in the "Search for the Spy," had made him aware of conditions of whose existence up to that time he had been ignorant. The anxiety of the English people and the condition of Paris when he had been permitted to enter the city, alike served to increase this feeling of alarm.

After Earl had returned to the kitchen and seen that the basket which he had carried for the old woman was still standing where she had left it when she had departed from the room, he looked hastily about him to see if the woman herself had returned.

He was, however, unable to discover any signs of her presence. Once more he called, and again silence was his only response.

Almost desperate by this time, Earl again approached the door, but found that the fastenings could not easily be broken. Turning again to the windows he found that he could not open them without breaking the little chain to which the padlock was attached.

Eagerly peering into the street he was unable to see any passerby. Several minutes elapsed and still no one came. His thought now was to arouse the attention of any one whom he might see on the street and perhaps in this way he might be assisted in escaping from the building.

Several minutes elapsed before any one appeared. Then Earl saw a young girl walking along the streets carrying a small basket. Quickly he rapped upon the window pane, and a moment later was elated when he saw the girl stop and stare curiously at the place from which the noise had been heard.

Aware that his words could neither be heard

nor understood, nevertheless Earl tried to make his wants understood.

“Me no get out. Me shut in. Me pay you. Help me out.”

Just what effect the eager boy thought his “pigeon English,” or ungrammatical expressions, would have is not clear. Almost unaware of what he was doing he had dropped into this form of speaking.

He was startled, however, when he saw the girl turn abruptly as she heard the rapping, and stare blankly for a moment at the window. Then, instead of responding to Earl’s frantic motions for her to come to the door, she turned and fled swiftly up the street and soon disappeared from sight.

At first, Earl was not without hope that she had gone for help. Indeed, with confidence he waited a few minutes, expecting the return of some one whom the girl doubtless would bring with her.

Several minutes elapsed, however, and no one was seen on the street.

At last, fearful that the girl had been more alarmed than aware of what his motions meant, Earl decided that he was to expect no help from her.

Meanwhile no other passersby had been seen.

Earl now was tempted to break the glass in the window and crawl through the opening thus made. Fear of what might befall him and confident that

such an act would be misunderstood by any one who might see him, led him to decide to wait a little longer and try to secure the help of some one who soon must pass.

At least ten minutes must have elapsed, Earl thought, before he saw another person on the quiet street. An old man was crossing almost in front of the house.

Earl saw that he was older than at first he had thought. Indeed the man appeared to be decrepit and able to advance only with great effort at every step. As the man stopped on the sidewalk in front of the house Earl rapped again upon the window pane.

The man, however, did not even glance in his direction. Again Earl rapped still more noisily but still the man gave no heed. In a brief time he would be beyond Earl's sight, and the boy, well-nigh frantic by this time, rapped so strongly upon the glass that it was shattered by his blows.

## CHAPTER XX

### A STRANGE LETTER

**A**GHAST at the unexpected result of his effort, Earl hastily glanced behind him, fearful that the sound had summoned some one who might be watching his actions while he was unaware.

Apparently the crash had not aroused any one in the building and when Earl glanced out into the street, he saw that the old man had not turned or even looked toward the place from which the startling sound had come. And yet the breaking of the glass must have been heard by any one nearby who was not deaf. Was the old man unable to hear? Once more Earl called sharply through the hole in the glass and then whistled shrilly several times, doing his utmost to attract the attention of the passerby.

His efforts, however, were vain and the old man soon passed on beyond his sight.

Again Earl turned to listen for the sound of any one approaching from within. Silence still rested over the building, however, and when several minutes had elapsed he was fully con-

vinced that he must be the only one in the house.

The continued silence, however, had become intensely oppressive. Several minutes Earl stood by the window, waiting for any sound that might indicate that the crash had been heard. He was soon convinced that so few people were moving upon the street that his action had not drawn the attention of any one outside the building.

Apparently, too, either there was no one inside or no attention had been given the startling sound.

Convinced that if he was to depart from the building it must be through his own efforts rather than through any aid he might receive, he turned quickly to the glass and hastily pulled or broke all that remained in the sash.

The glass itself was long and narrow. When at last all the window had been removed, Earl, thrusting out his head, glanced hastily up and down the street and then squeezed through the narrow passage.

Once outside and on the street he breathed more freely. Even the alarm that had held him while he was shut in the house departed now and with a calmer mind he was prepared to leave.

Once more glancing in either direction he saw that no one was near, and then abruptly he approached the door and gave several resounding knocks on the iron knocker.

There was no question in his mind that the sound of his summons must have been heard in every part of the house. He was eager now for some one to answer the summons. Freedom had given him added courage.

Twice he repeated his use of the heavy knocker, but for each appeal there still was no response.

Convinced now that the house indeed was empty, Earl quickly turned away. He was eager to return to the office of the American ambassador and learn if any word had been received concerning his missing brother.

As he drew nearer the place he was seeking he met more people on the street. Many of these were still anxiously gazing skyward as if the fear of the "war birds," was ever present. It is true these people were quiet in their manner, but that they were anxious, the expressions on their faces clearly betrayed.

Before Earl had left London he had heard of the expression "a Zeppelin neck," a term used by the English people which described the effect of continually looking toward the sky.

Only slightly interested in the actions of the Parisians, Earl hastened on his way and soon arrived in front of the office he was seeking.

His interest and pleasure alike were keen when he saw that the office now was open. Hastily

entering, he saw that several people already were in the room, and a brief time after he had sent in his card the young assistant who had aided him the preceding day, came forth to greet him.

“Good morning,” said Earl quickly. “Have you heard anything further from—”

“What is the matter with you?” interrupted the assistant. “What have you been doing? Where have you been? What has happened to you?”

“Why, nothing much,” stammered Earl in confusion; and then as he followed the glance of the young man before him he saw that his hand was covered with blood.

“There is some blood on your neck too,” suggested the assistant. “Have you been in trouble?” he inquired in a low voice.

“Yes, and no. I came down to your office before it was open this morning, and while I was waiting, I took a walk up the Rue de something or other. I was about to pass an old woman who was struggling to carry a heavy basket and as I had plenty of time myself I offered to carry it for her. At first she did not seem to want me to help her, but at last she gave in and I carried her basket, and it was heavy, too. She led the way to a house and I followed her into the basement, still carrying her basket.”

“Where was this?” inquired the assistant.

“On this Rue de something or other, that I told you about. The strange part of it all is that the old woman disappeared and I couldn’t find anybody in the house. The doors and windows were all locked on the inside. Most of them had little chains and padlocks. I went over the house and up and down the stairways and called out a good many times but no one paid any attention to me.”

“Did you see any one?” inquired the young man, at once deeply interested in the story Earl was telling.

“Not a soul. Even the old woman had disappeared.”

“And did she leave her basket in the basement?”

“Yes.”

“How did you get out of the house?”

“I tried to attract the attention of a deaf man by rapping on the window. I guess I must have done some rapping because the glass was broken. When I found I couldn’t get out any other way I pulled out the glass that was still in the pane and came here.”

“Then you must have cut yourself.”

“Quite so, as the English say,” laughed Earl, who was aware by this time that he had only received a slight surface wound.

The young American was aware also that his friend was exceedingly serious. Was there more in the story than he had thought? In such perilous times he knew that many strange things were taking place, but he had not connected the house in which he had been detained with anything alarming. Now, however, he was somewhat startled and his feelings were not relieved when the young assistant said to him, "Can you wait here a little while?"

"I think so," replied Earl hesitatingly. "How long?"

"Only a few minutes. I want to call some one on the 'phone. This whole matter may be a good deal more important than you think."

Excusing himself, the assistant at once departed from the room. Five minutes later he returned, the expression on his face betraying his interest as well as his concern, when he said, "A couple of officers will be here in about eight minutes."

"Do you think there is anything wrong there?" inquired Earl in a low voice.

"I cannot say. You know there have been some discoveries made in London and Paris, which are not likely to make people sleep any more soundly. We have word to-day from London that a house which was supposed to be occupied by some German music dealers has walls that are more than

five feet thick and they were made of cement. The roof is as heavy as the walls, and the floor was found to be at least ten feet deep and made of the same material."

"What do you make of it?" asked Earl.

The assistant shrugged his shoulders as he said, "Suppose London should be attacked, would it not be to the advantage of the Germans to have a few places inside the city from which bombs might be thrown, or at least where they might be stored? Why, nothing from the sky could hurt that house and if they wanted to they could mount a Krupp gun on the foundation."

"You don't suppose there is anything like that in this house where I have been, do you?"

"I cannot say. I do not know."

"But the German army is being pushed back toward the border, isn't it?"

"It is. All our reports agree on that. Whether they are withdrawing simply to get a better position along the banks of the rivers and in the hills, or they are really being driven out of France it is too early to say. Both armies are fighting strenuously, but I confess I feel better to think of the fighting being a little further away from Paris."

"You have not told me," said Earl abruptly, "whether you have had any further word from my brother or my uncle."

"Not a word. Wait a minute," added the young assistant quickly.

"There is a letter here which I want you to see. I do not suppose it has anything to do with your brother, but I would like much to have you see it."

At once withdrawing from the room the young man soon returned with an unopened letter which he handed Earl.

The boy glanced at the directions and laughed as he read them. "'Mrs. E. Platt.' There may be some such lady in the world, but I do not know her. I haven't been looking for her as yet and I had thought I would keep on waiting until about ten years later. Where is this from?"

"The directions are not clear. It was left at our office late last night. There may be some mistake, but if I were in your place I should open the letter and read it."

"Do you think it has anything to do with Leon?"

"I do not know anything about it. You can open it and see whether there has been some mistake made in the directions. If it concerns you, why, all right, and if it does not, you can leave it here and mark it 'opened by mistake.' "

"But the letter is not mine," protested Earl.

"You may do as you choose, but if I were in your place I should open the letter."

Thus bidden Earl tore open the envelope and drew out the following letter,—

“Madame:—

“Your son is seriously wounded. His life depends entirely on the assiduous care of myself, his nurse.

“While at his bedside I think of my own son who, lying helpless on a battlefield only slightly wounded was cowardly finished by a revolver bullet by one of your soldiers, perhaps even your son, now under my care.

“I am not a saint. My revenge is easy. To-night an extra dose of morphia will do justice for the death of my son.

“I am sending you here the last good-by of your son.

(Signed) “M. A.

“Red Cross Nurse.

“Postscript. Madame, your son is safe. He will be well within two weeks. I have merely wanted to make you live for a minute the long hours of inconsolable mourning which now will be my life.”

“What do you think of that?” demanded Earl, when at last he had finished reading the letter aloud.

“I do not know what to think of it,” said the young man slowly. “We will talk about that later. Here are the two officers who want you to go with them to that house in which you had your adventure.”

“I do not know that I had any adventure,” protested Earl lightly.

“Never mind that. You show these men which house it is.”

The young man introduced Earl to the officers, one of whom spoke English.

Soon afterward, Earl was on his way with the two men, walking quietly along the street which led to the house in which his strange experience had occurred.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE SEARCH

THE name of the lieutenant who was walking with Earl was De Pree. He was a young man not more than twenty-five years of age. There was a frankness in his expression and a friendliness in the smile which frequently lighted up his face that had drawn Earl strongly to him.

“How far did you say the house is from here?” inquired the lieutenant.

“About fifteen minutes if we walk.”

“That is good. We shall soon arrive. I shall be grateful if Monsieur will tell me once more still of his strange adventure.”

“I am not sure that there was any strange adventure,” replied Earl. “I am puzzled whenever I think of it. I came to the office of the American ambassador this morning, but it was not open. While I was waiting I walked along the boulevard and turned into this side street. I kept on, not planning to go anywhere but just walking until the ambassador’s office should be opened. Just as I was about ready to turn back I saw an old woman struggling under a heavy

basket she was carrying. As I had plenty of time and a little more strength than she had, I offered to help her."

"Was she glad to be helped?"

"Not particularly," said Earl with a smile. "In fact I do not think she was very cordial, when I come to think of it. However, she handed me the basket and I carried it for her to this house we are looking for now."

"Why did Monsieur go into the house?"

"I do not know," said Earl. "I did not think she wanted me to come, but the basket was so heavy that I insisted upon taking it for her."

"Is it known what was in the basket?"

"Cabbages."

"What?"

"Cabbages," repeated Earl.

The young officer shook his head, as if still he did not comprehend what was said. A little later his face lighted up as he said, "Cabbages."

It was Earl's turn now to be mystified, but a moment later both seemed to understand the meaning of the other and they laughed heartily.

"Why should the cabbages make the basket so heavy?" inquired the lieutenant.

"I do not know. All I can say is that I never lifted a basket of cabbages as heavy as the one that feeble old woman was carrying along the street."

“And Monsieur is positive that he can conduct us to the house?”

“Yes.”

“And are we becoming somewhat nearer?”

Earl smiled as he replied, “Unless some one has been there to fix the broken glass I shall have no trouble in pointing out the house. Indeed, unless I am mistaken, it is that house yonder, the one next to the corner.” As he spoke, Earl pointed to the place they were seeking and conversation abruptly ceased.

It was manifest that the young lieutenant was keenly observant, not only of the few people whom they met, but also of the houses on either side of the street.

What was in his mind Earl had no means of knowing, but his interest became keener as they drew near their destination.

At the end of their brief walk, Earl stopped and in a low voice said, “This is the place. There is the window I broke.”

“It is so. Will Monsieur remain on the sidewalk a little time?”

Apparently taking for granted that his suggestion would be obeyed, the lieutenant and his companion quickly mounted the steps and loudly announced their presence by means of the iron knocker.

Earl smiled when no response was given to their

summons, recalling his own attempts in a similar line.

Several times the lieutenant repeated his effort to summon any one who might be in the house, but, satisfied at last that the knocking either was not heard or was disregarded, he drew a bunch of keys from his pocket. Selecting one he tried to open the door. His efforts failed, but success crowned his attempt with the fifth key. The door swung open. Turning quickly, the lieutenant beckoned to Earl to join them as they entered the house.

Eagerly the young American followed the bidding of the officer, and in a brief time all three men were within the building and the door once more was closed behind them.

Somehow Earl was enjoying the adventure. Perhaps the fact that he was no longer alone did not detract from his pleasure. Earl Platt was not a coward, but there had been moments when he had been alone in this house when all his courage had been required to prevent him from fleeing from the place. Now, however, the confidence of his companions, and the fact that they were armed, restored Earl's former courage and he was as interested as either of them in the discoveries he was confident they were about to make.

Proceeding at once to the room which Earl had entered with the old woman, a low exclamation escaped the lieutenant's lips when he saw stand-

ing on the floor the basket which Earl had described. Plainly its contents had not been removed, for the cabbages were still there, just as Earl had described them.

Eagerly kneeling on the floor the lieutenant quickly removed the vegetables and then said, "Ah, it is as I suspected! We shall see some more excitement. Will Monsieur kindly glance in this direction?"

Advancing to the side of the kneeling officer Earl uttered an exclamation of surprise when he saw the lieutenant take from the bottom of the basket several strange cylindrical pieces of metal.

"Does Monsieur see that?" demanded the officer excitedly, as he held up to view one of these strange implements. It was at least two and one-half feet in length and capped with copper.

One after another the lieutenant removed the strange looking objects from the basket, handling them with extreme care, and all the time his eyes shining in his excitement.

"Does Monsieur now recognize what these things are?" inquired the lieutenant of Earl, pointing as he spoke to the row which he had carefully placed upon the floor.

"No," replied Earl. "I have not the slightest idea what they are."

"Listen. Monsieur shall not say he has seen the bombs."

“What!” exclaimed Earl startled at once.

“They certainly are. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight bombs,” he triumphantly counted.

“And all in the basket of cabbages that old woman was carrying?”

“It is so. And where eight bombs are, there may be more. We shall see. Does Monsieur care to come with me while I look?”

“Yes,” answered Earl eagerly. “Do you think this is a house in which bombs were being hidden?”

“Certaintment. There is no question. The old woman was much scared. In some way she must have given word to the others.”

“What others?”

“The men who were in the house.”

“How do you know there were any in the house?”

“The woman would not come here with bombs otherwise.”

“Do you think they were in the house when I came in?” inquired Earl aghast.

“I cannot say. It is quite much probable. Very likely they were watching Monsieur when he came. Very likely they were scared when they see some one come with the old woman. They do not wait. They run swiftly. They escape before Monsieur can see them.” The young French officer was excited now and his hands and

shoulders frequently were used to emphasize the astonishing statements he was making.

"Whew!" whistled Earl. "They may have watched me all the time I was in the house."

"I do not think so. I think they have fled swiftly when first they see some one coming with the old woman."

"What part did she have in it? Do you think she knew what she was doing?"

The young Frenchman shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands to give expression to his inability to reply, and also to show his confidence that undoubtedly she was one of the conspirators.

"They may have been Germans," suggested Earl.

"Certainment. They surely was Germans. Come with me and I may show you some more objects of interest."

At once beginning his investigations in the room where they were standing, Lieutenant De Pree was unable to find anything to confirm his suspicions that the house was the rendezvous of parties who were collecting bombs to be used when Paris should be besieged.

When the investigating party mounted the stairway to the floor above, the excitement of the lieutenant soon was markedly increased. In the drawers in an old Dutch secretary he discovered seven more bombs like those which first had been

found. They all were carefully removed and placed in a row on the rug.

“This is not all,” said the lieutenant, as the search was resumed. “We shall find much more. Oh, the enemies of my country! They fight us from the sky. They fight us from under the sea. They send their spies into my city. They even try to destroy us by secreting their bombs in our houses.”

“Do you think there are many Germans now in the city?” inquired Earl anxiously.

“I cannot say,” answered the lieutenant cautiously. “If we shall find some more I shall soon think there shall be less.”

Without asking for the somewhat puzzling statement to be explained, Earl joined in the search which now was continued by all three. The walls were sounded, the fire-places were examined, and even the tiling was removed. The upholstery on the chairs was cut to make certain that it did not conceal one or more of these terrible implements of destruction.

The search, however, was not rewarded, for no more bombs were found on that floor.

When the searching party mounted to the next floor, however, they discovered several more of the dangerous contrivances. These were all carefully removed and taken to the basement.

“We now have eighteen,” said the lieutenant

when the search was at last completed. "This is not all. Like the old woman who was bringing some in her basket of cabbages other peoples shall bring more."

"Not now, will they?" inquired Earl. "They won't bring any more after we have found out the place where they were hiding?"

"No, they shall not bring some more here. We shall watch the place when they shall not see. I shall soon have my friends to come. Will Monsieur remain with me?" the lieutenant added. Turning to the third member of the party he spoke to him in French. Earl did not understand what was said, but as the soldier quickly departed from the house, he was confident he had not yet arrived at the end of his adventure.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE WORDS OF THE LIEUTENANT

“**W**E will sit here,” said the lieutenant, as he returned to the house and pointed to some chairs in the library.

It was manifest that the house at one time had been occupied by people of wealth. The furnishings, although badly worn, were of the richest material, and the pictures which were still hanging upon the walls were the works of famous artists.

“Why did the plotters take a house like this?” inquired Earl as he glanced about him with renewed interest.

“That I cannot say,” said the lieutenant with a shrug of his shoulders. “They will take the place where we shall not be so able to find them.”

“Do you think there are other places in Paris where bombs are stored?”

“Yes, as I told you. I very much fear the enemies of my country have already been busy inside our city. They shall never come in through the gates! They shall never take beautiful Paris!

If Paris shall be destroyed, we ourselves shall see to it that the barbarians do not do the damage."

"Will you try to find the other men? Do you think there are some in the plot besides those who are in this house?"

"Certainment. We shall surely find them."

"What would you do with them if you found them?"

"They will never know. It will be so quick what we shall do."

"I suppose," said Earl, "you will stand them up against a wall and appoint a firing squad."

"That will be too much mercifulness. What you think? Men who have crept into our city and have made bombs by which even the little babies shall be torn into bits,—what you think is just the good enough to give to such people?"

Earl smiled and for a brief time conversation ceased. His own interest at the time was much deeper in the strange letter which he had received than in the plots of the enemies of France.

Once more he drew the letter from his pocket and read it through carefully. Its meaning was more puzzling than when first he had seen it. Who could have written it? There was nothing to indicate the place from which it had been sent. The signature, M. A., was meaningless. Earl tried to recall persons whom he knew whose initials would correspond to the signature. He was

unable, however, to recall any one whose names began with those letters.

As Earl glanced up from the missive in his hand, he saw that the eyes of the lieutenant were upon him, and moved by a sudden impulse he handed the letter to his companion.

“I wish you would read that,” he said, “and tell me what you think about it.”

In surprise Lieutenant De Pree took the letter and read it through twice before he glanced up at the excited boy who was standing in front of him.

“What do you think about it?” repeated Earl eagerly.

“I do not know. For whom is the letter?”

“Mrs. E. Platt,” laughed Earl.

“And who is she?”

“I do not know,” said Earl in some confusion. “I have never seen her. My name is Earl Platt, but I have never seen any Mrs. E. Platt.”

“And yet,” said the lieutenant, “the letter is to Madame E. Platt.”

“I know it is. That is what puzzles me. But you do not know the story,” he added.

“I do not know the story,” repeated the lieutenant.

“I think I shall tell it to you,” said Earl. And the young American began at the beginning of his strange experiences in the summer and re-

lated most of the events in which he had shared that had occurred since that time.

He explained also that he had received strict orders from his father to find his brother, who now was somewhere in France.

The young lieutenant shook his head when Earl asked if he knew his uncle, whose home had been in Faubourg St. Germain.

Earl could see that he was listening intently and with deep interest.

"Pray, please proceed," said the lieutenant, when Earl hesitated a moment.

"I have been going to the office of the American ambassador and one of the assistants has been doing everything in his power to help me."

"And he has not found your brother?"

"No."

"And he does not know where your uncle now is?"

"No."

"And how did this letter come to him?"

"I don't know. I had no time to ask him about it this morning. He handed it to me just before you came in and I had only just read it when he spoke to me about coming with you to this place where you have found the bombs. Do you think there is any possibility of these bombs going off?" inquired Earl.

The young lieutenant laughed as he said, "Not

when they are harmless and side by side. Perhaps sometime later they may be used, but you need not fear at the present time."

"I am not alarmed," said Earl. "I am ready for almost anything. I have been on a torpedo-boat destroyer, and on board a German mine-layer and now I am in a house that might have been blown up with bombs."

"Not this house," said the lieutenant soberly. "The bombs were not prepared for this house. There is no reason why this house should be blown up. The bombs were kept here. They were designed to be used in other parts of the city."

Earl laughed at the statement and then said, "But you have not told me what you think about that letter."

"What is your uncle's Christian name?"

"Adrian."

"And your uncle's wife's?"

"Her name is Ernestine."

"That is eet. That is eet," said the lieutenant lightly. "Madame E. Platt. That is eet. That is eet. You are not married?"

"Not quite," laughed Earl.

"That ees so. Not yet. This letter cannot be for your wife."

"Since I haven't any wife probably you are correct."

"If you had a wife the letter may be for her."

“Yes, but I haven’t any wife, and the letter is here and is directed to Mrs. E. Platt.”

“Yes, surely. You shall see this letter is meant for your aunt. She is Mrs. E. Platt.”

“That’s so,” said Earl, “but what I want to understand is that if it is meant for her why should it be sent to the office of the American ambassador.”

“Why, certainly! Where else shall letter go except to that office? Your uncle is an American, is he not?”

“No, he is a Frenchman.”

“Then who shall say where his letters shall go?” said the lieutenant, shaking his head as if the matter was too puzzling for him to solve. “I shall think much over this matter,” he added as he arose and approached the window.

Turning quickly he said, “I see Jean with some of my men. He shall guard this place while I shall make some questions of the neighbors. You shall do just what you like. You shall stay here or you shall go with me, while I visit these peoples.”

“If you do not mind,” suggested Earl, “I think I will go back to the ambassador’s office. I want to find out more about this letter.”

“It is a most strange letter,” said the lieutenant. “I do not see for what any woman shall write such a word as that. Even if she have lost

her own son why shall she make some other mother suffer also likewise?"

"This woman signs herself M. A.," said Earl. "I don't believe she has any son. I wonder if the letter is not a fraud?"

"We shall know some more pretty quick," said the lieutenant, as he turned from Earl to welcome the men who had come in response to his order.

As soon as he had arranged for a guard, the lieutenant withdrew from the place, and Earl stopped on the street a moment later to watch him as he announced his presence at two or three of the adjacent houses.

His efforts apparently met with no success. Whether nothing had been seen or the people were too alarmed to tell what they knew, Earl could not decide. His own problem, however, was pressing, and soon leaving the neighborhood, convinced that he would know later what the lieutenant had discovered, he walked rapidly along the street and in a brief time once more was seated in the waiting room of the American embassy.

The young American was compelled to wait an hour or more before the assistant who had been his special friend entered the room.

"Have you any more news?" inquired Earl hastily as he arose.

"Not quite."

"What do you mean by that?"

“I mean that we have found nothing definite. There are some indications that we may know more very soon.”

“How soon?”

The young man smiled as he said, “You haven’t forgotten your Yankee tricks, even if you are in a foreign country. If I knew just when we should have word I should be only too glad to tell you. All I can say is that we are on track of something which may give us the information we desire.”

“When shall I come again?” said Earl.

“It will be well for you to come every morning. But do not go just yet. I want to talk with you a little more about that strange letter you received this morning. Is it here?”

“Yes,” replied Earl, as he drew the letter from his pocket and handed it to the assistant.

“May I read it once more?”

“Certainly.”

The young man read the letter through again and as Earl was keenly watching his countenance, he was unable to determine whether or not any light had broken upon the perplexing problem.

“Have you any idea of any one who might under certain circumstances write you such a letter?”

“I have not,” said Earl. “The letter is addressed to Mrs. E. Platt. My aunt’s Christian name is Ernestine. Perhaps the letter may have been meant for her.”

“Has she any sons?”

“No.”

“It could not have been meant for her, then,” said the young man positively. “It may be, however, that we shall be able to give you more definite information to-morrow. Meanwhile tell me what happened to you and Lieutenant De Pree.”

Earl briefly related the outcome of their inspection of the mysterious house, and then, striving to keep up his courage, departed from the office to go back to his hotel where he expected to meet Lieutenant Garnold for luncheon.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### WORD WITH EARL'S UNCLE

**E**ARL was only partly aware of the excitement of the people as he walked along the street. The depression which rested over Paris had been lifted in a measure. The removal of the seat of the French Government to Bordeaux had increased the alarm of many of the Parisians, but the spirit of determination to resist to the uttermost was still manifest on every side.

There was confidence too in the rings of forts with which the city was surrounded. In spite of these things, however, the plain and unmistakable fact that the army of the invaders was not far away, and that they had driven their army forward with tremendous force and speed, was not to be denied.

Earl, however, was thinking more of his own difficulties than he was of the outcome of the big war, as he proceeded on his way.

“And where have you been?”

Earl heard the question as he entered the hotel and glancing to his right saw Lieutenant Garnold standing near him. In spite of the quiet bearing

of the young man it was manifest that he was keenly excited, although Earl was not aware of the cause at the time.

"I have just come from the office of the American ambassador," replied Earl.

"And have you received any information that will aid you?"

Earl shook his head disconsolately as he said, "Not yet. I am hopeful that I shall receive some word by to-morrow morning. But I have had a stirring time of it."

"In what way?"

Earl briefly related the story of the strange letter he had received and was somewhat chagrined when he was aware that the recital had not made the impression upon his friend that the events themselves had produced in his own mind.

"I hope," said the lieutenant, "that you will have no difficulty in locating your brother. I myself must be on my way back to England."

"Right away?" inquired Earl in surprise.

"Within an hour."

"Have you accomplished what you came to Paris for?"

"Indeed I have," said the lieutenant quickly. "Even more than I expected I have received."

As the young officer did not explain further, Earl was left in ignorance concerning the result of the visit, as he had been in the beginning concern-

ing its cause. It had seemed very strange to him that a lieutenant in the navy should leave his ship and make his way to Paris in such a time as this.

“Are you coming back?” inquired Earl.

“I hope not. I do not expect to come. If all goes well I shall be busy in the—”

“You talk as if your statements had been censored about as badly as the despatches from the front,” laughed Earl. “I am glad you have succeeded though, in obtaining what you came for, and if I am as fortunate I shall be still more glad.”

“I hope with all my heart that you will succeed,” said the lieutenant cordially, as together he and his companion entered the dining room and seated themselves at a table where they could look out upon the streets of the city.

The interest of Lieutenant Garnold when Earl related the details of the adventure, which he had had in the morning, was keen. Eagerly he encouraged the boy to tell all he knew and when the story was ended he gruffly said, “ ‘Tis what must be expected. What can you say of people who scatter mines in the North Sea and even come over among the trawlers to lay their mines?”

“I do not see why they have not a perfect right to lay their mines and to disguise themselves as best they can.”

“Ah, yes,” said the young English officer, “I fancy that is the view they take of it, but it seems

to me barbarous. We have not scattered mines, and I am very confident we shall not, except along the coast in the vicinity of our harbors. If this thing keeps on much longer, the North Sea will have to be closed to navigation for the neutral nations, as well as for all others. Germany will suffer more than any other country if this is done. And did you say that this Lieutenant De Pree had not arrested any of the conspirators?"

"He hasn't found them," said Earl quickly, "much less has he arrested any."

"He will find the men. They cannot escape from the city."

"I am sure I hope he will," said Earl.

Conversation lagged somewhat as the lieutenant evidently was busy with his own thoughts, while Earl was thinking also of his own immediate problems.

No word was to be expected from the ambassador's office before the following morning. Meanwhile there was little that Earl could do and the hours of the afternoon promised to be heavy.

As soon as luncheon had been finished, the lieutenant, after he and Earl had returned to the lobby, turned to the boy and said, "I am most pleased to have met you and to have been of some slight service. I can only hope that you will succeed in finding your brother."

"Thank you," replied Earl quietly.

“And now I must leave you. I am to depart from Paris within an hour and must make my preparations.”

“Are you going back the same way we came?”

The lieutenant shook his head as he replied, “That I cannot explain to you. Indeed, I do not know.”

“With all my heart I hope you will meet with no mishap and that soon the English navy will dig out every boat the Germans have.”

“Thank you, sir. Thank you kindly.”

The good-bys were spoken and not long afterward Lieutenant Garnold departed from the hotel.

An automobile had been sent for him and Earl was convinced as he watched his departing friend that it belonged to the French government.

Still the purpose for which the lieutenant had come to Paris had not been explained to Earl; but he was quite content, believing that some day he would know and that meanwhile his own difficulties were sufficient to occupy his time.

Not long after the departure of the lieutenant, a small bell-boy approached Earl and said, “Are you Monsieur E. Platt?”

“Yes,” replied Earl quickly.

“There is a call for you on the telephone,” explained the boy in broken English.

“For me?” inquired Earl in surprise.

"For Monsieur E. Platt."

"That is my name," said Earl quickly, as he turned at once and followed the boy who led the way to the telephone booth.

There was some difficulty in locating the call, but at last Earl was able to distinguish the voice of the young assistant at the office of the American ambassador.

"It will be well for you to come here at once," he said.

"Why?" asked Earl. "Have you found anything? Have you heard anything?"

He could hear the laugh of the assistant over the wire as he replied, "Why do you think I called you? It is plain that we are both Yankees because whenever one of us answers the other's questions it is by asking still more questions himself. I do not want to talk much over the wire, but if you will come around to the office at once, I think you will be interested in what I have to say to you."

It was now the middle of the afternoon. Earl did not delay and in a brief time departed from the hotel, walking rapidly toward the ambassador's office. He passed people who still were looking skyward, and as he followed their gaze he saw high above the city a Zeppelin. It looked very much like a cigar hung high in the sky.

Aware of the damage that this "war bird"

might be able to accomplish, he looked in surprise at the people that had assembled, to watch the war-ship of the air.

Even his interest, however, did not detain him and in a brief time he arrived at the place he was seeking.

He was compelled to wait a few minutes before the assistant was able to see him again. But when he was received by his young compatriot Earl was aware before the young man had spoken that some information of value had been received.

“What is it? What have you heard?” inquired Earl in a low voice.

“We have been able to locate your uncle.”

“And where is he?”

“In Bordeaux.”

Earl whistled as he said, “I am afraid that will not do me any good. Do you know whether or not my brother is with him?”

“I do not know anything except what I have told you. Yes, there is,” said the young man quickly, “there is one other matter I have found out and that is that you can get your uncle on the 'phone. Perhaps you would like to try it.”

“Where can I telephone him?” said Earl.

“Right here in our office,” said the assistant, as he led the way to the telephone booth. “I have the number and address and if you wish I will call him up for you.”

"If you please," said Earl heartily.

Once more there was a delay, but when ten minutes had elapsed, the assistant, handing Earl the receiver, said, "Here he is. This is Mr. Adrian Platt," he explained. "I have told him that you are his nephew."

Trembling in his excitement Earl took the receiver and in a moment was holding a conversation with his uncle.

After one or two questions had been asked, Earl said eagerly, "Is my brother Leon with you?"

"He is not."

"Do you know where he is?"

"I wish I did know. He left Paris before the war broke out and we have had only one word since. I do not understand why your father should let you come to Paris in such a time as this. It is not safe for any one there. Your aunt and I fled from the city before the government was removed to Bordeaux."

Earl briefly explained the purpose of his visit and then added, "I have a letter which was addressed to Mrs. E. Platt. I opened it and read it. It is from a red cross nurse, or maybe from a pretended red cross nurse, who says that she is caring for a son of Mrs. E. Platt in a hospital."

"Does she say where the hospital is?" inquired his uncle.

"There is nothing in her letter to ~~sh~~<sup>earful</sup> pursuit.

it is. I do not know. Have you had any word whether Leon is in the army or not?"

"Yes," said his uncle slowly. "That was the last word we had from your brother. He said he had been accepted as a helper to a French aviator and that he was with the aviator corps."

"Did he enlist?" asked Earl aghast.

"That is what he said."

"Then it may be possible that he is wounded and in a hospital somewhere."

"That is quite possible. Indeed it is quite probable. I think I shall come to Paris to help you in the search for him."

"That will be great!" exclaimed Earl enthusiastically. "When will you come?"

"To-morrow. Where shall I look for you?"

"At the *Regina*."

plaintive.

"For me."

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE OLD WOMAN

**W**HEN Earl returned from the booth, to his surprise he saw Lieutenant De Pree standing beside the assistant.

“Did you get word from your brother?” inquired the latter, eagerly.

“All I learned was that he had enlisted and had been given a place in the aviator corps.”

“What!”

“That is what my uncle told me. So it may be possible that the letter which was sent to Mrs. E. Platt was meant for my aunt and that my brother really has been wounded and the nurse thought he was her son.”

“What are you going to do now?”

“My uncle is coming to-morrow. I shall do nothing until he comes.”

“I shall help,” broke in Lieutenant De Pree, quickly. “You have been a very great assistance to Paris. You have located the house where the bombs are hidden. You shall not be forgotten. You shall see.”

earful

“I did not do anything,” said Earl lightpursuit.

tried to help an old woman with her basket, and just stumbled upon the place where some plotters were at work. It was lucky for you that I did."

"Very lucky. But you shall go with me and we shall find something. You shall not be forgotten. You shall see that we are very much grateful."

"But where are we to go?"

"Ah, that too you shall see."

As Earl had not planned for the remainder of the afternoon he consented to the suggestion of his friend and together they departed from the office. The lieutenant was still profuse in his expressions of thankfulness for what Earl had done. The latter laughingly protested, but soon abandoned his attempt, convinced that nothing he could say would change the opinion of his companion.

"I shall take you to see one great man. You shall soon have that pleasure."

"And what am I to see him for?"

"He shall swiftly tell you how you shall find your brother."

Earl stopped abruptly and seizing his companion by the arm whispered, excitedly, "Look across the street! Do you see that old woman over 'here?'"

"Yes."

plaintively, "Well, she's the old woman I helped with her  
"For h,"

“Be careful. Do not make some mistake.”

“I am sure,” said Earl.

“Then we shall follow her.”

“It will be better for you to follow her,” said Earl hastily.

“Not at all,” said the young French officer, bowing politely as if he were conferring some favor upon his companion. “You shall have all the glory. You shall see where she shall go. If she shall see me she shall be much afraid.”

“Why?”

“Because she shall see my—my—, what you call it?” added the officer as he pointed to his uniform. “She shall suspect who I am. At once we shall have very much trouble. Behold,” he added in a low voice. “We shall both follow. Then it may be that I shall go back and you shall see what becomes of the woman.”

At the suggestion of the lieutenant, Earl quickly crossed to the opposite side of the street. He had been warned to disguise his purpose, and, as the woman before them was moving very slowly, he frequently stopped to peer into the windows of the many little shops.

Meanwhile the lieutenant, keeping well behind the person in whom he and Earl were interested, did not lose sight of the woman.

At times he dropped back until Earl was fearful that the lieutenant had abandoned the pursuit.

In every instance the young officer soon appeared again, strolling indifferently along the street, or occasionally stopping for a word with the little children, who never hesitated to come to him at his call.

The old woman was walking very slowly. Apparently she was in no fear, for Earl could not see that even once had she glanced behind her or looked across the street. Apparently too she was feeble. Her footsteps were short and frequently she stopped as if to recover her breath. Plainly, she was old, and as the young American keenly watched her movements, he was puzzled to understand why one so helpless should have been selected by the spies or conspirators to share in their plot.

As Earl proceeded he was thinking almost as much of the coming of his uncle on the morrow and of the search which then would be made for his missing brother, as he was of the problem immediately confronting him.

It was something to be informed that Leon was in some hospital. Had he been taken to some tent near the line of battle? Or had he been sent back by train to some of the villages or cities, or even to Paris itself?

He had read of the trains filled with wounded soldiers which had steadily been coming from the battle line. He shuddered as he recalled the fre-

quent report of the great numbers of those who had been shot. Never in the history of the world had the awful carnage of battle been as great as in the struggle between the forces which now stretched in a wavering line almost from the Swiss border to the shores of the North Sea.

Earl was recalled to his task by the discovery that the old woman had abruptly turned into a side street. This street was much more narrow than the boulevard along which they had been walking and Earl was fearful that the presence there of himself and Lieutenant De Pree might more readily be discovered if any one was following them. Of this latter possibility he had become aware through the actions of the lieutenant, who now turned into the side street, still remaining on the opposite sidewalk.

Somehow the young American was convinced that the footsteps of the old woman were quickened soon after she left the more important streets. He was unable to account for the change in her manner, although he was keenly observant of her actions.

It was plain too that the lieutenant was aware of the change for he was much more alert now and Earl saw that he frequently glanced at the windows of the houses by which they were passing.

Several minutes elapsed, however, and the quiet

pursuit of the aged woman continued without any incident of interest. Not once had she glanced behind her, and if she was fearful that she was watched or followed there was nothing in her attitude to betray her alarm.

Earl was positive that he never before had been on the street along which he was now walking. More people were met as they proceeded further on their way, although very few men were seen. Women were standing on the sidewalk or in the doorways of their houses, with their arms akimbo and all were talking earnestly. It was plain from the expression on their faces that their fears and anxieties were supreme in their minds.

No one had spoken to the old woman. If she dwelt somewhere on this street it was but natural to suppose that at least some of the neighbors would know her. It was also plain that if she was as weak as she appeared to be, she would not be able to walk very much farther.

They were now approaching a cross-street. The section of the city was becoming more dilapidated. Apparently the old woman had no thought of turning into any of the nearby houses, for she cautiously picked her way across the open space and walked with difficulty up the slight incline.

The lieutenant now crossed to the side on which Earl was walking and said in a low voice, "Please to go on a little farther."

"I am willing to go as far as you want me to," said Earl. "I have nothing to do until my uncle comes to-morrow."

"I do not mean so," said Lieutenant De Pree, "I mean you are to go in advance. What you say —to go ahead. I have suspect that three men are following us. Do not look behind you," he added hastily. "But there are three men. Two are on this side of the street and one is on the other side."

The young officer and Earl were not walking side by side and to all appearances either was indifferent to the presence of the other.

"What makes you think those men are following us?" inquired Earl as he stopped a moment to tie his shoelace, an action which enabled him to glance keenly along the street behind him.

He saw the three men, as the lieutenant had indicated. There was nothing in their actions to lead him to infer that they were acting together or were especially interested in the lieutenant or himself. They, too, apparently were sauntering, and although two of them were near together, as far as Earl was able to see, they did not speak to each other.

Resuming his walk, Earl soon rejoined the lieutenant, who had stopped on the curbstone, and in apparent indifference was looking about him. Stopping as if to ask a question Earl said, in a low

voice, "I see the men. Why do you think they are following us?"

"I am sure they are watching us," replied the lieutenant quickly. "I am thinking it may be well for you to go back. You are in a part of Paris which you do not know. You are a long way now from your hotel. I would not have you get into some troubles and I am not afraid, even if I am here alone."

"I am not going back," said Earl quickly.

"That shall be as you say, but I have no desires to bring you into some troubles."

"Do you think we are going to have any trouble?" inquired Earl in a low voice.

"We shall see. Perhaps it may be that you shall be with me and that if I have need you shall go for to call some helps."

"I am not going to leave you," said Earl again more resolutely. "We must start though," he added, "if we are to keep the old woman in sight."

"You shall cross to the other side," suggested the lieutenant, "and I will follow on this side."

Earl did as he was bidden and several minutes elapsed before any event of special interest occurred. The old woman was still proceeding painfully on her way, and when Earl glanced occasionally behind him he was aware that the three men were still to be seen.

The excitement of the young American increased as he became more fully convinced that Lieutenant De Pree had not been deceived when he had declared that he was being followed.

## CHAPTER XXV

### ATTACKED

**W**HEN Earl looked back at his companion he saw that he was about to enter a small shop, one of several along the street at this place. Puzzled by his action, Earl waited a moment to see whether or not he speedily returned.

Two or three minutes, however, elapsed and still Lieutenant De Pree did not appear. Looking behind him again Earl saw that the three men had halted, and, although they were not together and apparently were having nothing to do with one another, they were not advancing.

Convinced that whatever the cause of the delay might be it would be wiser for him to follow the old woman, who had been the object of their interest so long, Earl quickened his pace. Not far ahead of him he still saw her hobbling along the street as if every step was causing her pain.

The young American had not gone far, however, before, glancing again behind him, he saw the lieutenant appearing from the shop into which

he had gone. Looking hastily first up and then down the street Lieutenant De Pree then followed in the direction in which Earl and the old woman had gone.

Why he had stopped, was still a mystery to Earl. He watched him eagerly to see if any change in his plan was made. Apparently the interest of the young officer was still centered in the old woman, who was slowly and painfully proceeding not far in advance of them.

As we know Earl now was on the opposite side of the street. The lieutenant was not many yards behind the woman. Looking anxiously behind him, Earl saw that the three men were again advancing, although they were no nearer than when he had first discovered them.

The street still seemed to be largely deserted. Here and there a few ragged children were playing in the gutter and occasionally a few women were to be seen, one of whom usually was standing in a doorway while her friends were assembled about her. It was not difficult for Earl to conjecture that the topic of their conversation was the war. He tried to picture to himself the appearance of the men in whom these women were interested and whose help they needed now in the support of their homes.

At that moment Earl was startled when he saw Lieutenant De Pree quickly advance. In a brief

time he approached the old woman and touched her lightly on her shoulder.

Excited by the action of his companion Earl quickly moved forward and at the same time he saw that the three men behind him also had quickened the pace at which they were walking.

The young American did not venture to cross the street at this time, but, still remaining on the opposite side, he halted, eagerly awaiting the outcome of the action of the lieutenant.

Apparently the young officer spoke to the woman, although Earl was unable to hear what was said. It was plain that a brief conversation followed and it speedily was manifest that the woman was intensely excited.

Earl could hear her voice now as she talked to the lieutenant, at the same time gesticulating more and more wildly with her hands.

The voice of the excited woman soon rose to a scream, although Earl was still unable to discover any fresh cause for her excitement.

A moment later, she sprang at the lieutenant in a manner which indicated that her age was only in her appearance. She seemingly was as lithe and active as a panther. With a blow she struck the cap from the head of the young lieutenant and leaping directly upon him began to pull and claw at his hair, meanwhile screaming in her loudest tones.

For a moment Earl stared in astonishment at the unexpected sight. It was not difficult to understand that the suspected woman had assumed a disguise, but that in the open street she should violently attack an officer of the army and scream so loudly that her voice could be heard two blocks away, was something that he could not understand.

Scream still followed scream and with each fresh vocal attempt her efforts to scratch the face and to release herself from the grasp of the young officer were increased.

Heads of women and children now began to appear at the windows of the houses in the nearby street, and soon loud-voiced protests increased the confusion caused by the screams of the lieutenant's prisoner.

Earl was unable to understand much French, as we know, but he had no difficulty in comprehending the nature of the remarks which were made by the excited spectators. With one accord they were protesting against the action of the officer and loudly were demanding the release of the woman.

A few moments later some of the bolder women emerged from the houses and noisily and somewhat boldly approached the place where the struggle was occurring.

Convinced that it was high time for him to go

to the help of his companion, Earl decided to cross the street and join in the fray. He had a momentary glimpse of his father and mother as he pictured them receiving word of his arrest for taking part in a brawl in one of the streets of Paris. The sight before him, however, was very real, and Earl was preparing to cross the street to give such assistance as was in his power, when suddenly he was seized from behind and violently flung to the ground. It was impossible for him to recognize the men who had attacked him, but he was instantly convinced that the three suspicious characters who had been following him had now approached and that they too had decided to join in the fray.

It was useless for him to struggle long. Two men were engaged in the attack, and even from where he was lying Earl saw a third running hastily across the street, doubtless intending to try to release the woman from the officer who had seized her.

His attention, however, speedily was diverted to his own problem. The boy struggled desperately to free himself but in a brief time it became plain that his efforts were useless. He was attacked by two men, each of whom apparently was stronger than he.

Soon the angry boy was stretched upon the ground. One man seated himself upon the body

of the helpless boy, while the other hastily grasped and securely bound his feet. It was impossible for him to rise now and the weight of the man who was seated upon his chest prevented him from calling for help.

For a moment Earl thought that such an open attack in broad daylight would be prevented by the action of the people who saw it. It speedily became plain, however, that there was to be no interference.

Convinced now that his struggles were useless, Earl's efforts relaxed and a moment later the man who had bound his feet approached and with an ill-smelling, filthy rag attempted to gag him.

Earl once more struggled desperately, but his efforts were vain. In a brief time he was helpless, his hands as well as his feet were tied, and it was impossible for him to call for help.

The two men who had attacked him then arose and held a brief whispered conversation. Earl did not understand what was said, but, as he was still able to turn his head, he saw that one of the men was pointing excitedly toward Lieutenant De Pree, who still maintained his grasp upon the arm of the woman he had been following.

It seemed to Earl that her screams now were not so loud as previously they had been and that her efforts to pull the hair or scratch the face of the young lieutenant were less frantic.

In a moment, however, one of the men who had attacked Earl ran hastily across the street and joined the third man who had been running toward the place where the struggle was occurring, but for some strange reason he did not approach nearer than twenty feet.

Earl did his utmost to free his hands. His struggles, however, seemed to draw still more tightly the cords by which he was bound.

He felt as if the knots were cutting into his flesh. It was equally impossible for him to move his feet, and the ill-smelling cloth which covered the lower part of his face prevented him from calling for help.

Convinced that his attempts were vain and equally positive that his predicament soon would be discovered and that help of some source speedily would arrive, Earl turned himself upon his side so that he was able to see what was taking place farther down the street.

His own difficulties for the moment were almost ignored when he saw Lieutenant De Pree abruptly turn to face the three men who now were approaching and doubtless were threatening him. The young lieutenant drew his sword, an act which caused the three assailants to stop. Apparently their courage speedily revived, for a moment later, crouching as if they were ready for

a sudden spring, they again advanced. At that moment the woman, whom the lieutenant had been holding by her arm, succeeded in freeing herself from his grasp, but before she could flee the lieutenant struck her with the flat of his sword and Earl saw her fall to the street.

The sight seemed instantly to arouse to a still higher pitch the anger of the three men in the attacking party.

Earl saw that one of them held a pistol in his hand, but, as he was about to use it, his companion laid his hand upon his arm and prevented him from shooting. The delay, however, was to be brief. Earl, helpless as he was, was convinced that the fate of his comrade and perhaps of himself as well, was not to be questioned. Doubtless the trio would overpower the lieutenant and either make him a prisoner or leave his lifeless body on the sidewalk.

And his own fate would be not unlike that of his companion. At that moment Earl saw the lieutenant step backward and at the same instant two of the attacking band leaped forward. For an instant he closed his eyes trying to shut out what he thought must be the fate of the brave young officer. Suddenly, however, to Earl's astonishment, the two men lifted their companion who had fallen and swiftly ran a few yards farther

up the street and abruptly disappeared from sight.

At the same moment a sound came from the street behind him which increased Earl's excitement.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### CONCLUSION

**T**WISTING and turning himself with difficulty, Earl saw a body of a dozen or more soldiers moving swiftly up the street. At the same time a band, fully as large, was approaching from the opposite direction. The coming of these men at once explained the abrupt flight of the trio which had bound the young American, as well as attacked the lieutenant.

The relief in the heart of Earl was great. Now he was positive the danger had passed and he soon would be free from his bonds.

At that moment Earl's attention was recalled to the plight of Lieutenant De Pree. He was able to see him, as he resolutely continued to hold the struggling woman, who now was screaming more loudly than before. In addition to her shrill cries, she was kicking, biting and struggling to the utmost of her strength in her efforts to free herself from the firm grasp of the young lieutenant.

Most of the women who had hastily appeared on the street at the beginning of the uproar, had abruptly disappeared from sight. Doubtless,

thought Earl, if he was standing upright he would see their faces peering out from the windows in the houses.

His interest now, however, was chiefly in the arrival of the soldiers. He wondered why the two bands had appeared at the same time and at such a moment of dire need. It was impossible for him to move from the position in which he was lying, but he saw the men, as, breaking into a run, they advanced rapidly up the street.

In a short time they came to the aid of the struggling lieutenant who now was compelled to exert himself to the utmost of his strength to prevent the desperate woman from escaping.

She was no longer "old," although her torn dress and her disarranged hat were not more apparent than the wig which had fallen from her head into the street.

The coming of the soldiers, however, speedily put an end to her struggles. Her hands were securely bound and a bandage was tied across her mouth so that she was no longer able to emit the piercing screams with which she had accompanied her desperate efforts.

Next there was a brief conference between the lieutenant and the leader of the band, the result of which was that the woman was placed in the center of the force and compelled to depart with the soldiers from the street.

Lieutenant De Pree remained in the place where he had been attacked, watching the departing men until they turned the first corner. Then, apparently reminded of his companion, he glanced hastily along the street until he discovered the place where Earl was lying.

Running swiftly he soon approached and speedily relieved the young American from the bonds by which he was held.

“I did not see them. I did not know. They have not hurt you I shall hope,” said the lieutenant sympathetically.

“No, I am not hurt,” said Earl ruefully, as he began to brush the dust from his clothes.

“Wait one minute. I shall assist you.” Eagerly the young officer helped Earl and in a brief time the latter was somewhat more presentable, although he still bore the marks of the treatment he had received.

“Who were those men?” inquired Earl as he gazed ruefully at his discolored clothing.

“They are my friends. They belong to my company.”

“How did they happen to come at just this time?”

“I have telephoned. Did you not see me when I went into the little shop?”

“Yes. Was that what you were in there for?”

“Indeed, it was. What you say—‘sure.’ I

have suspected who the three men are and I stop to send word for some aid."

"The men got away, though," suggested Earl.

The lieutenant smiled as he said, "They have not got away very much. They shall be taken soon."

"Who are they?"

"I suspect very much they are the men who have gathered the bombs in the house where you have helped the old woman." The lieutenant laughed heartily as he referred to the woman whom he and Earl had followed.

"She is a very much vixen," continued the lieutenant. "She is not much old. I have my suspect that she may be a man, a very strong man at that. I have never seen such commotion."

"Her voice sounded like a woman's," said Earl.

"Indeed, yes. It may be that she is some woman who is very much strong. But she is not old," said the lieutenant positively, shaking his head as he spoke. "I have some black marks from her teeth and her scratches."

"Perhaps they will be able to make her tell who and where the men are now."

The lieutenant shook his head as he said, "Perhaps. I very much think she will not tell. I shall now have the pleasure of bidding you good-by."

"Is it a pleasure?" laughed Earl.

“A very great pleasure to have meet you. It is a great sorrow to depart. I vastly hope you will find your brother.”

“Thank you,” said Earl quietly, as he shook hands with the lieutenant and then in a brief time started toward his hotel.

As soon as he arrived at the *Regina* he made inquiries concerning any message or word that had been received for him, and was somewhat relieved to learn that no word had come. Going at once to his room he soon removed all traces of his recent experiences and donned one of the suits he had bought soon after his arrival at Paris.

The experiences of the day had been most exciting and for a time Earl was almost unmindful of his own predicament as he thought over the adventures through which he had passed. He wondered if any other American boy had had experiences as unique as his had been. Certainly his time had not dragged. And now if success should attend his efforts to find his lost brother, he was positive he would not regret even the thrilling experiences which had come to him.

As the afternoon drew on, however, the reaction came and Earl’s spirits drooped. The thought of the great distance between himself and his home, as well as his uncertainty concerning the fate of Leon, made him somewhat depressed.

It was difficult for him to busy himself suffi-

ciently to prevent the return of his feeling of anxiety. On the street he was aware that the spirits of the people of Paris were rapidly reviving. Already the huge German army had been turned northward and there had been no break in its retirement. If reports were to be believed the army of the Allies was speedily compelling the invading forces to withdraw.

And yet the German army had been almost at the gates of Paris. The war was not ended. Indeed, there was a feeling in Earl's heart that it had only just begun. It was the most stupendous struggle in the history of the world and either army could not easily be crushed. Both England and France, with the passing weeks, would be able to train fresh troops and steadily to increase their armies. Germany had been better prepared at the outbreak of hostilities, but her great plan to force her way to the gates of Paris before her enemies could assemble troops sufficient to check her progress, had been thwarted.

Somehow the afternoon and evening passed, although Earl was unable afterward to recall any events which had occurred.

When he went down to the lobby of the hotel the following morning he saw a man standing near the desk, who he instantly concluded was his uncle.

Although several years had elapsed since he

had seen him, he was familiar with his appearance from the photographs which at frequent intervals had been sent to America.

Quickly approaching, Earl tapped the man upon the shoulder as he said, "I beg your pardon, but are you not Mr. Adrian Platt?"

"I am," said the man, as abruptly he faced his questioner. "And you, I take it," he added, "are Earl Platt."

"Yes, sir."

"I should have recognized you from your strong resemblance to Leon. Have you had your breakfast?" he added.

"Not yet."

"Then as soon as I can go to my room you and I will be served together."

"I do not know about the 'service,'" laughed Earl. "There are not many waiters left to attend to your wants."

"Do you not get sufficient food?"

"Oh, yes. There is no difficulty about that. We get enough to eat, though of course there is not much variety. Most of the waiters, however, have gone to the front."

A short time afterward, Earl and his uncle were seated together in the dining room, and eagerly were talking over the exciting events which had brought them together.

"You will be interested," said Mr. Platt, "in

knowing that at last I have definitely located Leon.”

“Where is he? Where is he?” inquired Earl, his eyes shining in his excitement.

“He is in a hospital—”

“Shot?” interrupted Earl, his face becoming colorless, as he spoke.

“Yes, but not seriously wounded. According to my information he will be able to leave the hospital within two weeks.”

“Where is he?”

“In a little village a few miles from the left wing of our army.”

“Can we go to him?”

“No. As soon as he is able to be moved we must have him sent to us. We can look after him for a little while before he goes back to the Aviator Corps.”

The reference to the position which Leon held, at once led to a full explanation of his nephew’s activities. Earl listened not only with interest, but with deep concern. It was like his brother to enlist without having obtained the consent of any one. Indeed, Earl thought he understood how carried away the boy had been by his excitement, and when his uncle explained Leon’s meeting with the young French aviator, he did not require much more to be said to enable him to see what naturally had followed.

Nor had he been surprised when his uncle had told him that he would probably never know why his recent companion, Lieutenant Garnold, had made his visit to Paris. He must content himself with the knowledge that much of his safety on his journey had been due to the fact that he was a companion of the young naval officer, whom he hoped soon to see again.

The pressing problem in Earl's life, however, was the discovery of his brother. He listened with deep interest while his uncle explained the means by which, through his friends in the army, he had at last discovered what had befallen the young American.

"Now," he added, "as soon as we have found out more about him, we will see how best we can have him brought back to his friends."

THE END



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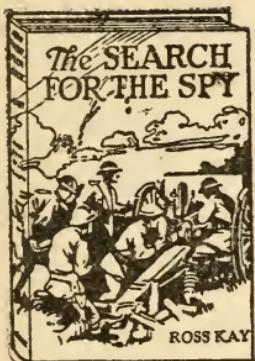
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